CHURCH, DRAMA, AND THE COOL HAND LUKE EFFECT:

THE DECLINE OF MAINLINE CHURCHES IN AMERICA

An Honors Fellows Thesis

by

JENNIFER GRACE PURDY

Submitted to the Honors Programs Office
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

April 2011

Majors: English
Theatre Arts

CHURCH, DRAMA, AND THE COOL HAND LUKE EFFECT:

THE DECLINE OF MAINLINE CHURCHES IN AMERICA

A Senior Fellows Thesis

by

JENNIFER GRACE PURDY

Submitted to the Honors Programs Office
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

Approved by:

Research Advisor: Michael Greenwald
Associate Director of the Honors Programs Office: Dave A. Louis

April 2011

Majors: English
Theatre Arts

ABSTRACT

Churches, Drama, and the Cool Hand Luke Effect:
The Decline of Mainline Churches in America. (April 2011)

Jennifer Grace Purdy
Department of English
Department of Performance Studies
Texas A&M University

Research Advisor: Dr. Michael Greenwald
Department of International Studies

In 1967, Warner Bros. released the film *Cool Hand Luke* and out of this film came one of the most famous quotes in the history of motion pictures: "What we've got here is a failure to communicate." That same year marked the beginning of a slow decline in mainline Christian denominations in America, such as the United Methodist Church, despite the overall growth of Christianity. The purpose of this thesis is to present, explore, and evaluate one possible reason for this decline. Throughout American history, there is an interesting phenomenon in which the acceptance of Christian drama in America largely depended upon primary mass communication media being visual or image-centric. Therefore, this thesis hypothesizes that the decline of mainline Christian denominations can be attributed to a breakdown in communication between the church and American society as a whole; evidence of this communication breakdown can be found by simultaneously analyzing the history of advances in communication media, societal shifts along the left-brain/right-brain spectrum, and Christian drama. Due to the

vastness of all that is "Christian drama," the scope of this thesis is primarily limited to surveying the development of Christian drama in America. However, this thesis also examines the rise, evolution, and decline of the Corpus Christi York Cycle in medieval England so as to lay the groundwork for understanding the development of Christian drama in America. The decline of this immensely popular form of medieval Christian drama is one of the clearest examples of the Protestant Reformation's effects in generating suspicions of and antagonism towards Catholicism. This suspicion would later influence the beliefs of sixteenth century Puritans and affect the creation of "American" values. The relationship between the church and theater would remain deeply antagonistic until well into the late nineteenth century. This animosity would eventually subside before the arrival of the twentieth century, particularly following the invention of film, which provided a new medium for Christian drama. The invention and diffusion of television is arguably the single greatest causative factor in the decline of mainline Christian denominations.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends, for their unending love, patience, and support; you know who you are. Also, this thesis is dedicated in memory of Dr. Douglas A. Brooks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Michael Greenwald, my thesis advisor, for always encouraging me to do my best. I would also like to acknowledge the professors who also played an instrumental role in the formation of this thesis – Dr. Donnalee Dox, Dr. Douglas A. Brooks, and Dr. Kirsten Pullen – as well as Dr. Amy Earhart for first introducing me to the world of undergraduate research when I was a very young freshman. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research for their generous support of my research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER Page

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A CONTEXTUAL FOUNDATION

"What we've got here is a failure to communicate."[1]

In 1967, Warner Bros. released a film that would later be selected for preservation in the National Film Registry, a collection of "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant films selected annually by the Librarian of Congress and the National Film Preservation Board."[2] Now, 43 years later, *Cool Hand Luke* remains widely praised by critics and users alike, even garnering a solid rating of 8.3 out of 10 on the Internet Movie Database.[3] Simply put, the film presents the story of a likeable convict who refuses to conform to life in a rural prison.[4] However, as one critic articulately points out, the film "arrived on the scene in the late '60s, as a whole generation was rebelling against the establishment [and] this sentiment – that of a failure to communicate – exposed the social climate. [Stother] Martin's Captain represents an oppressive, authoritarian regime, while Paul Newman's Luke is the nonconformist who never gives up."[5]

This thesis follows the style and format of the *Theatre Journal.*

[1] *Cool Hand Luke* (1967).
[2] "Film/Recording Boards and Registries." *Audio-Visual Conservation*. (Library of Congress, 03 Aug 2007). Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[3] "Cool Hand Luke." *The Internet Movie Database (IMDB).* (Amazon.com, n.d.). Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[4] ibid.
[5] James Berardinelli. "Cool Hand Luke: A Film Review." *Reelviews.* (James Berardinelli, 2004). Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Out of this film came one of the most famous quotes in the history of motion pictures; a line that is widely regarded as being right up there with "Go ahead, make my day," and "Here's looking at you, kid."[6] *What we've got here is a failure to communicate.* This line, which has since been referenced in everything from "Rugrats" to "Californication," came to "crystallize 1960s discontent and the generation gap."[7]

However, *Cool Hand Luke* is but one byproduct of the '60s cultural revolution; another was the beginning of a slow decline in mainline Christian denominations, of which the United Methodist Church (UMC) remains the largest with roughly 7.9 million members.[8] In 1967 – the year *Cool Hand Luke* was released – the UMC had over 11 million members.[9] Overall, as recently as February 2010, the UMC is the third largest Christian denomination behind the Catholic Church (68.1 million members) and the Southern Baptist Convention (16.2 million).[10] That being said, however, using the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), the U.S. Census Bureau presents some interesting data in "Table 75. **Self-Described Religious Identification of Adult Population: 1990 to 2008**." In 1990, there were roughly 194,000 people who identified themselves as being "nondenominational." In 2001, that number increased to 2,489,000.

---

[6] Donald Liebenson. "Famous Quotes: They put the words in the actors' mouths." *Article Collections*. (Los Angeles Times, 02 Jan 2010). Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[7] ibid. Page 3.
[8] Philip Jenks. "Catholics, Mormons, Assemblies of God growing; Mainline churches report a continuing decline." *News from the National Council of Churches.* (National Council of Churches USA, 02 Feb 2010). Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[9] "United Methodist Church." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* (Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005). Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[10] Jenks.

By 2008, there were over 8 million individuals who identified as "nondenominational."[11] Conceivably, if this trend continues, nondenominational churches will, as a whole, quickly outgrow the UMC.

Bottom line, why are mainline denominations continuing their steady decline despite the overall growth of Christianity in America?[12] Is this too perhaps the result of a failure to communicate?

Thesis statement

The decline of mainline Christian denominations can be attributed to a breakdown in communication between the church and American society as a whole; evidence of this communication breakdown can be found by simultaneously analyzing the history of advances in communication media, societal shifts along the left-brain/right-brain spectrum, and Christian drama.

Due to the vastness of all that is "Christian drama," the scope of this thesis is primarily limited to surveying the development of Christian drama in America. However, this thesis also examines the rise, evolution, and decline of the Corpus Christi York Cycle in medieval England so as to lay the groundwork for understanding the development of

---

11 "Population: Religion." *2011 Statistical Abstract*. (U.S. Census Bureau, 20 Jan 2011). Web. 6 Apr 2011.

12 "U.S. Membership Report." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005. Web. 6 Apr 2011. According to the ARDA, from 1980-2000, the total number of adherents (or regular attendees) within all Christian denominations increased by approximately 26.3%.

Christian drama in America. Also, this thesis will use *theatre* to refer to live performances, *film* to refer to film productions, and *drama* to refer to both.

The rises and falls of Christian drama in Western, English-speaking society closely correlates with (1) the arrivals of various technological innovations in mass communication media and (2) the shifts of society across the left-brain/right-brain spectrum (also referred to as the Word/Image spectrum). The history of Christian drama is ideally suited for this particular type of analysis because the mere notion of Christian drama inevitably creates a dynamic, hegemonic relationship between the church, the theatre, and the society as a whole.

This thesis takes on the role of cultural studies as "an intellectual project that seeks to explore the relationship between culture, social relations, power, and the capacity of individuals and groups to define and meet their needs."[13] I feel that I do need to stress that the use of this approach will affect the fundamental structure of this argument in some important ways. In a very real and somewhat ironic sense, the mere framing of this paper is a manifestation of the adage, "The medium is the message" (as coined by McLuhan).[14] Whereas historians traditionally favor a more left hemispheric, linear mode-of-thought within their interpretations, the assumption of this alternative approach results in an examination that is markedly holistic. The foundation itself rests on the

---

[13] Gordon Lynch, "Cultural theory and cultural studies." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film.* 278.
[14] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: The New American Library, 1964) 35.

notion that parts of something are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole.

Perhaps the most important idea to keep in mind is that this approach assumes the existence of a wholly unconscious thread of history, one that, to my knowledge, is only just beginning to be articulated in the academic arena. I was first introduced to this new holistic academic-worldview in Fall 2007, after I signed up for an ENGL 390 course that was taught by the now late Dr. Douglas A. Brooks at Texas A&M University in College Station. We spent an entire semester exploring this approach to history, which Dr. Brooks defined using feminine versus masculine terms. He also referred to this approach as learning to recognize the *unconscious* "her-story" and its effects in shaping the *conscious* "his-story." This approach essentially boils down to studying the effects of communication media on and within a society. As it happened, at the same time I was taking this course, I was taking my THAR 381 course, Theatre History I for majors, in which I was subsequently introduced to the York Cycle (the topic of Chapter II). It is from this somewhat uncanny juxtaposition of these classes that the strains of this paper were first conceived.

The frameworks

I have compiled three frameworks (previously described) to assist in organizing and constructing my argument. As Calvin Pryluck wrote, "A good theory helps us to know what we know; it will help organize the evidence, perhaps explain parts of it, and

certainly point to other useful evidence worth collecting."[15] The purpose of these frameworks is to help us know what we know. I have divided these frameworks into three levels: the theoretical level (underlying causes); the shift (the immediate catalysts and mechanisms of change); and, finally, the evidential level (the results/historical events).

The core framework, the heart of this thesis, is almost purely theoretical. It is composed of Shlain's arguments, mentioned above, and serves to introduce and define the Hidden Thread of history. The media framework guides the analysis of the shift level through a study of the catalysts and the mechanisms of change, which are: one, improvements in communication media and the diffusion of innovations (the catalyst); and two, audience reception theory and the uses-and-gratifications approach (mechanisms of change or "change agents"). Finally, the peripheral framework, composed of various cultural studies theories, addresses the study of the results.

The core framework

The core framework of this thesis is not so much a framework as it is a paradigm shift and a new way of looking at familiar events. This use of this framework is absolutely central in my argument. I cannot stress this point enough. This is what forms the core foundation upon which I base my entire argument.

---

[15] Qtd. in Ibid. 45.

In 1998, Leonard Shlain published a book, *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: the Conflict Between Word and Image*. Shlain writes that, while on a trip in Greece, he began to wonder what caused the "disappearance of goddesses from the ancient Western world... what event in human history could have been so pervasive and immense that it literally changed the sex of God?"[16] His answer? Literacy. At this time, Shlain – a doctor by day – had just published his first book, which had required him to study how different communication media affected society. He writes:

> While on that bus ride, and perhaps because of my heightened interest in *how we communicate*, I was struck by the thought that the demise of the Goddess, the plunge in women's status, and the advent of harsh patriarchy and misogyny *occurred around the time that people were learning how to read and write*. Perhaps there was something in the way people acquired this new skill that changed the brain's actual structure. We know that in the developing brain of a child, differing kinds of learning will strengthen some neuronal pathways and weaken others. Extrapolating the experience of an individual to a culture, I hypothesized that when a *critical mass* of people within a society acquire literacy, *especially alphabet literacy*, left hemispheric modes of thought are reinforced *at the expense* of right hemispheric ones, which *manifests as a decline in the status of images, women's rights, and goddess worship*.[17]

As a quick note, throughout this paper, I am particularly interested in these three manifestations, or as I like to call them, these "literate symptoms" of a society that acquires literacy. Shlain's book is structured as a series of opposing pairs where each side can be categorized as either feminine or masculine, which is hardly a new concept (yin/yang, day/night, etc.) Shlain proposes that a "*holistic*, *simultaneous*, *synthetic*, and *concrete* view of the world are the essential characteristics of a feminine outlook while

---

[16] Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1998) vii.
[17] Ibid. viii. (Emphasis mine.)

linear, *sequential*, *reductionist*, and *abstract* thinking defines the masculine."[18] Here are a few examples of this feminine versus masculine dichotomy: image/word, right brain/left brain, nonverbal/verbal, and birth/death. I do modify his argument slightly in the sense that I argue that the Word/Image pair exists on a spectrum because they are eventually able to blend with each other and form a mediated, postliterate culture; this idea is discussed more in the conclusion. Throughout this paper, the conflict between the Image and the Word is largely analyzed through its manifestation as the conflict between Catholicism (Image) and Protestantism (Word) for reasons that will later become clear.

The media framework

The audience is obviously indispensable, given the very nature of performance, but it is also perhaps the single most difficult facet of performance for which to seek an academic understanding. While not impossible, even endeavoring to fully understand audiences in one's own society and time, let alone in another culture or time, can prove remarkably difficult. In his work *The Spectator and the Spectacle,* Dennis Kennedy likens the consideration of audiences to falling into intellectual quicksand because:

> …audiences are not (and probably never have been) homogenous social and psychological groups, their experiences are not uniform and impossible to standardize, their reactions are chiefly private and internal, and recording their encounters with events, regardless of the mechanism used to survey or register them, is usually belated and inevitably partial. Almost anything one can say about a spectator is false on some level.[19]

---

[18] Ibid. 1.
[19] Dennis Kennedy, *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 3.

While Kennedy states that audiences are not homogenous social and psychological groups, my interpretation is that audiences are not *strictly* homogenous. By no means am I arguing that audience members do not have anything in common with each other or even with other audiences. I do, however, recognize that the process in which audience individuals receive and internalize the viewing of drama, particularly Christian drama, does take on various nuances from person to person. So how then is one to approach the quandary of seeking to understand this quintessentially elusive, but nevertheless crucial entity?

Generally, scholars utilize audience reception theories, which focus on an audience, or an individual within that audience, at a single performance and analyze the response at that performance. However, given the zoom-out focus of this thesis, traditional audience reception theories cannot be used because of their inability to address responses on a large-scale societal level due to its reliance upon a specific performance to provoke the necessary response for analysis. That said, as you may recall, the basis of Shlain's argument was an extrapolation of the experience of an individual to an entire society and *how* we communicate. Similarly, the basis of most audience reception theories is a focus on the experience of an audience, or an individual within that audience, at a single performance in order to analyze the response to that particular performance. In other words, audience reception theories analyze a specific audience response to a specific performance, or *catalyst*. Therefore, one can theoretically extrapolate this theory and apply it to a society so long as it relies upon a similar, but appropriately scaled catalyst.

As a result, I will attempt to substitute the specific performance with technology – specifically within communication media – because of its role in changing the status quo of *how* a society communicates, thereby provoking a societal-level response. I will use a combination of various academic theories and approaches in order to extrapolate audience reception theory appropriately.

Technology and media theories

This framework series forms the catalytic aspect of the extrapolated audience reception theory and focuses on the historical timeline of technological innovations in communication media. I use the following theories to compose this second aspect: media influence, diffusion of innovations, and uses-and-gratifications.

Media influence theory

Shlain quotes Robert Logan, the author of *The Alphabet Effect*, to discuss the influential power of media within a society.

> A medium of communication is not merely a passive conduit for the transmission of information but rather an active force in creating new social patterns and new perceptual realities. A person who is literate has a different world view than one who receives information exclusively through oral communication.[20]

The principal idea behind the incorporation of this framework is that a significant improvement in some form of media, provided that people within the society embrace it, will lead to a renegotiation of the balance of power.

---

[20] Qtd. in Shlain 24.

Diffusion of innovations

This theory of diffusion refers to and "articulates the process by which new ideas, practices, products, and the like are disseminated and adopted in a society or some part of it."[21] One scholar, Everett M. Rogers, presents a thorough explanation of this theory in his book, *Diffusion of Innovations*, which Bruce A. Austin clearly and succinctly summarizes.[22] Diffusion theory is used to analyze "the innovation itself, how the innovation is communicated, the time involved in its communication and distribution, and the process by which people accept [adopt] or reject it."[23] This theory breaks down its approach and analysis of the adoption process by answering two questions: how is an innovation adopted and what affects the rate of adoption?

The process of adopting an innovation contains three to five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision (if the innovation is rejected, the process generally ends here, but if accepted it continues on to the final two steps), implementation, and confirmation. The first step, knowledge, is the point at which a person becomes aware of an innovation and seeks to learn more about what it is and/or what it does. All things being equal, an opinion is not yet being formed at this point. Persuasion is the point at which a person begins to analyze the known data, weigh the pros and cons of the innovation, and formulate an opinion. The third stage, decision, is fairly self-explanatory. This is the

---

[21] Bruce A. Austin, *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences* (Belmont, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989) 59.
[22] For the most part, the following section on the diffusion-of-innovations theory is a summarized, paraphrased excerpt of Austin's explanation, which can be found on pages 60-62 of his book.
[23] Ibid. 60.

point of divergence, depending on one's acceptance or rejection. A rejection generally ends the process at this stage; however, in most cases, a rejection can later be reversed. A decision to accept continues the process. The fourth step, implementation, begins when the innovation is actually being used. The fifth and final step is confirmation, which is when an individual attempts to reinforce the adoption decision and to avoid or reduce any dissonance that might arise. The term dissonance in this sense is derived from its musical meaning of a lack of harmony between notes; here, it refers to a cognitive process by which a person rationalizes a decision after-the-fact.

The next question addressed during diffusion analysis involves identifying which factors affect an innovation's rate of adoption. Interestingly enough, it has been argued that it is the perception, rather than the reality, of these factors – or of an innovation's "perceived" attributes – that is a better predictor of adoption than an individual's personal qualities. Rogers identified five central "perceived characteristics" on an innovation that primarily affect its rate of adoption although other factors have since been suggested.

The five characteristics proposed by Rogers are: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. *Relative advantage* involves an individual's comparison of the innovation to what it replaces and is often measured by factors such as social prestige, convenience, satisfaction, and in economic terms. *Compatibility* refers to the innovation's perceived consistency with the person's existing values and needs.

Complexity refers to how well or how easily an innovation can be understood and used. The more complicated an innovation is perceived to be, the slower its rate of adoption. A fourth characteristic is *trialability*, which can be defined as the extent to which an innovation can be tested and tried out. Finally, *observability* pertains to how easily the innovation's results can be seen by others.

The additional variables that have more recently been suggested include: width of adoption, marketing actions, and the financial and social risks related to adoption. The *width of adoption* can actually refer to two things: one, the number of people who have adopted and are using the innovation; and/or two, the number of different uses for, or potential applications of, the innovation. *Marketing actions* affect the rate of adoption, usually positively, due to its ability to influence the perceived attributes of an innovation by maximizing its positives and minimizing its negatives. Finally, the *financial and social risks* associated with an innovation refer to the perceived cost of adoption in monetary and/or "social" terms, (i.e. whether it is socially acceptable or not).

In using this diffusion-of-innovations approach, I am primarily concerned with attempting to find or articulate the point at which the adoption of an innovation by individuals within a society reaches "critical mass." Critical mass does not necessarily refer to a specific number or percentage of individuals within a society so much as it refers the point at which a *noticeable* shift has occurred; alternatively, it can be defined as the "point-of-no-return" in the success of an innovation's adoption.

Uses-and-gratifications

The uses-and-gratifications approach is a form of motivation, or expectancy-value, theory that specifically focuses on asking why people use the mass media and what needs they satisfy as well as "*how* people make choices among (1) different media and (2) the variety of content offered by each medium…."[24] There are two major assumptions with this approach. First, it assumes an active audience that intentionally selects and attends to "media and content to satisfy various needs… Different people may use the same medium – and even the same message – for entirely different purposes. TV news, for instance, may satisfy information or entertainment motives, depending on the viewer."[25] Second, this approach assumes that "audience members are self-aware and can articulate their reasons and interests for selecting media."[26] Austin further elaborates on this approach:

> Audiences create expectations about media and media content and about the ability of media and media content to satisfy needs, and they develop strategies to achieve gratifications. Like expectancy theory, the gratifications approach relies on the concepts of outcome values and outcome expectancies. Prior media experience helps determine media use as a means to fulfill needs, since audiences gain familiarity with various media and media content over time.[27]

The primary purpose for including this theory within the framework is that it serves as a major connective factor linking the diffusion-of-innovations approach with audience reception theory.

---

[24] Ibid. 49.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid. 50.

The peripheral frameworks

I use a combination of three cultural theories to strengthen the frame of my argument: cultural context, cultural hegemony, and circuit of culture. The first theory – what I call the cultural context theory – is an approach that, in addition to presenting the historical context of an event, explores the impact of politics and ideology in changing a culture's worldview. It encompasses the idea, initially developed by cultural theorist Terry Eagleton, that there is a "place of intersection where ceaseless negotiation takes place, where the possibility exists for a transformation in what and how one thinks, believes, understands, and relates to the world."[28] Eagleton explains that

> there is one place above all where such forms of consciousness may be transformed almost literally overnight, and that is in active political struggle.... When men and women engaged in quite modest, local forms of political resistance find themselves brought by the inner momentum of such conflicts into direct confrontation with the power of the state, it is possible that their political consciousness may be definitely, irreversibly altered.[29]

The second theory of cultural hegemony, developed by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), is the idea that those "with social, economic, and political power also exert widespread influence on the culture dominating their society. The kinds of stories told in fiction, movies, and plays, for example, typically limit how most people in a society understand their lives and their potential for changing the power relations that enfold them."[30] Finally, I use the model of the circuit of culture, which was developed by

---

[28] Phillip B. Zarrilli, et al., eds., *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) 392.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. 258.

Richard Johnson because he argued that cultural analysis should be based on how cultural systems operated.[31] He proposed

> ...a holistic approach to studying cultural systems which would be interested in the contexts, structures, and processes of cultural *production*, the *texts and artifacts* produced, the ways in which these texts and artifacts were *read or used by people* in real-life settings, and how these processes of cultural production and consumption related to *wider social structures and relations*.[32]

He also argued that these different segments were bound together in a field of relationships. A later adjustment to this approach, in a key cultural studies textbook, broke the circuit down even more and added a consideration into "the ways in which cultural products relate to the *formation of social identities.*"[33] This approach particularly focuses on the importance of communication media in shaping cultural values, an idea that is both crucial and ubiquitous throughout my argument.

Overview

Chapter II of my thesis presents an understanding of the oral culture from which literate (specifically American) society emerged through an analysis of Christian drama during the period from the mid-fourteenth century to roughly the end of the sixteenth century. The York cycle – or, more formally, the York Corpus Christi Cycle Play – is the subject of Chapter II in this thesis; it is perhaps the most documented of the four extant cycle plays, which ran in different cities throughout England during the Middle Ages. The decline of this immensely popular form of Christian theatre presents one of the clearest

---

[31] Lynch, Routledge. 281.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid. 282.

examples of the effects of the Protestant Reformation in generating suspicions of Catholicism in any shape or form. With this in mind, I attempt to highlight the devotional nature of the York cycle and focus on how the York cycle became a form of sacrament, particularly with regard to the Passion sequence, in the sense that it would assist in creating a personal relationship with Christ through the idea of embodying his pain. This notion of embodiment, even today, is essentially considered to be Catholic and is evident even in the simple difference between the Protestant crosses and the Catholic crucifixes found within the church; the crucifix still has Christ's body on it whereas the cross does not. The bottom line is that the York cycle was not just a performance; it was a massive production that a collective group of amateurs were willing to undertake (and pay for) year after year that became deeply ingrained within the society's oral, preliterate culture. Furthermore, I analyze the decline of the York cycle as not merely a Protestant reaction against its inherent Catholic-nature, but rather within its larger context as a byproduct of the emerging literate culture establishing dominance over its oral predecessor. I also discuss why this particular Catholic/Protestant distinction is important.

Chapter III (1600 to 1894) more fully examines the shift to a more extreme literate culture in America. This chapter continues the thread of Catholic-geared, image-based suspicion because it would later play a major role in the formulation of Puritan beliefs. Given the Puritan foundation and influences of the United States of America, the relationship between the protestant church and theatre would remain sharply antagonistic

until the end of the nineteenth century. Please keep in mind as you read through Chapter III that I am by no means arguing that the theatre did not exist or that it was not a popular pastime for many individuals in the pre- and early-American eras. On the contrary, there is indeed a very rich history of the theatre in America. In regards to Christian drama specifically, I am also not arguing that it never existed; there is, in fact, much evidence of the popularity of various moral plays or sentimental dramas. What I am arguing, however, is that the majority of society still rejected the notion that the theatre could go beyond mere entertainment and be used to communicate the Christian faith. Neither does this mean that Christian believers did not attend theatrical productions because in reality most probably did; they just did so without the knowledge or consent of their Christian leaders. In a sense, I am arguing that both the church and the theatre were able to succeed as perfectly viable dominant influences because a critical mass of the societal audience had been able to firmly compartmentalize these two opposing forces. However, for most of the nineteenth century, there was a segment within the societal audience that had been able to reconcile these two forces – thereby embracing this idea of a Christian, morally edifying theatre – but it had not yet reached the necessary *critical mass* to create a paradigm shift in the entire society's worldview. The last section of Chapter III focuses on the late nineteenth century, when the hostility between the church and theatre begins to decline, and I explore both of the arguments for the reasons behind this decline as presented by Claudia Johnson (the author of one of my most influential research sources). However, after I describe my reasoning for disagreeing with both of Johnson's arguments, I present my own argument explaining

the reasons for this decline and relate it to my primary framework. I contend that each "symptom of literacy" as argued by Shlain – i.e., the decline in the status of the image, women's rights, and goddess worship – also begins a process of reversal. While this particular section might perhaps feel like a tangent – with an exploration into the effects of the invention of photography, the rise of the Woman's movement, and the transcendentalism movement – it is actually quite crucial. Its importance lies in the ability of this section to "zoom out" from the specifics of the church-theatre hostility to reveal how these (seemingly) completely unrelated events were simultaneously undergoing massive change; the resulting implication is that the cause(s) of change likewise occurred on a societal level.

Chapter IV (1895-Present) focuses on the invention of "moving pictures" and its effect in changing, again, the dynamics of communication and then, to a somewhat lesser extent, analyzes the compounding effects that emerged from other revolutions in communication media (such as the inventions of radio and television). This chapter also marks the first point at which the Protestant church – again, on a large-scale, societal level – actively embraced the notion of Christian drama. Arguably, towards the end of the nineteenth century, more and more church leaders began to recognize the viability of using the theatre as a means of Christian education and that to do so was *not* a violation and betrayal of the faith. However, there was still a major obstacle that prevented the societal use of the medium as such because, for so long, the theatre had been viewed as this seedy underside of society that promoted the sinful ills of idleness, alcoholism, and

prostitution. For the church, the problem of using Christian drama was no longer the medium itself, but rather its heavily tainted history. As a result, the invention of film was so revolutionary to the church because it provided a new, image-based medium that was wholly innocent and pure that could easily be embraced by the religious community. The resulting "sacred cinema" movement was a vivacious and enthusiastic one for the next twenty-five to thirty years until it began to falter for various reasons including the invention of radio as a new communication media, the introduction of movies with sound ("talkies"), and the onset of the Great Depression. From that point on, the relationship between the church and the movie-industry became significantly more complicated and even somewhat ambivalent at times. The church began to favor the regulatory role as "critic" and providing movie reviews for the masses. The approach shifted more to simply separating the mostly-secular-but-still-family-friendly-films from the movies that "good Christians" should either avoid or actively boycott. The invention of television – while crucial in further developing the use of image-based communication media in American society – did not directly affect this new "relationship" until the 1980s with the arrival of cable television. It was especially significant because it coincided with the period in which videocassettes were also introduced. The dual-advent of cable and the VHS-standard resulted in a significant blurring of the line between the Movie Theater and Home. This chapter also addresses the implications resulting from the ever-increasing turnover rate of new technologies that becomes especially apparent throughout the twentieth century.

Again, as I progress through these chapters and use this historical relationship between the church and theatre as a specific example, I attempt to highlight how this unconscious her-story can be traced throughout this trajectory and, more importantly, to articulate how this Hidden Thread was able to influence the events of history via a technological catalyst and an audience-reception mechanism. Finally, Chapter V, the conclusion, connects this herstorical trajectory with 21st century American culture. In addition, the conclusion addresses the emergence of today's new "electronic" culture, discusses the implications for Christian drama (and, by extension, the church) within such a culture, illustrates how the use of this specific approach engenders an effective and unique understanding of Christian drama's modern audience, and how this knowledge can potentially move the medium from simply surviving to thriving.

CHAPTER II

ENGLAND

I am going to ask you to do an exercise that some may consider difficult. I am going to ask you to imagine. Imagine a play that begins at 4:30 in the morning, runs until well past midnight, calls for over 300 different speaking roles, and is segmentally performed at twelve or more different locations. Imagine that this play results from a collaborative effort from a local community that lives, not in today's society, but rather in medieval England. No electricity, no professionals, and, to a large extent, no literacy.

As previously discussed, the purpose of this chapter is to create a better understanding of the oral, image-based, Catholic culture from which the literate, word-driven, Protestant society emerged. This chapter will first summarize how the York cycle came about as well as its basic organization and present the necessary terminology. Second, it will explain the devotional nature of the cycle and why it was important to the illiterate people of York. Third, it will address the documentation, text, and authorship of the cycle. Fourth, it will give more information regarding the cycle's economic, political, and social structure. Next, it will focus in on a specific production to analyze performance methods and audience conventions in order to illustrate the primary motivation of the cycle as sacramental theatre. Finally, it will argue that the decline of the York cycle was not merely the result of a Protestant reaction against its inherent Catholic-nature, but rather emerged within its larger context as a byproduct of the emerging literate culture establishing dominance over its oral predecessor.

The York Corpus Christi Cycle

The York Corpus Christi Cycle may have come into being as early as 1376 – the date is uncertain due to a lack of documentary evidence – and, by 1415, had "assumed the shape and scope it was to have for the rest of its career."[34] Scholars are not certain what precisely contributed to the establishment of the cycle, although several theories abound. One potential, highly favored contributor is its economic health with the "great flowering of York's prosperity in the second half of the fourteenth century, after the Black Death of 1349, when the city stood second only to London in national importance and wealth."[35]

Terminology

This paper will follow the terminology utilized by Meg Twycross in her article "The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays," in that the whole cycle is called a *play*, while the individual portions are called *pageants*. In the York Cycle, there were often over 50 pageants that collectively composed the play itself. Each pageant, or episode,

> ...was delegated to a separate group, a trade or religious guild, which was totally responsible for its production. Each group had or shared a mobile stage also called a *pageant* [or wagon], which when their turn came they pulled through the city along a traditional route, stopping at prearranged *stations* (the word means 'stopping places') to perform their episode.[36]

---

[34] Richard Beadle and King, Pamela M., eds., *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) xv.
[35] Ibid. ix.
[36] Meg Twycross, "The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre,* ed. Richard Beadle(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 39.

As mentioned, this chapter will later focus on a specific pageant – *The Crucifixion*, which was assigned to the Pinners' trade guild – in order to provide a more in-depth look on possible audience reactions.

The York cycle as devotion

Given that Catholicism was the official and primary religion of an illiterate England during the run of the York cycle, many scholars argue that the viewing and performance of the cycle play provided the performers and audience with a means of devotion and, especially in *The Crucifixion*, with an opportunity to 'embody' the suffering of Christ. With no feasible means of connecting with the 'word' of God – even the church services were performed in Latin and not the local vernacular – creating a physical, embodied connection with Christ remained one of the primary methods of forming a relationship with God. If one looks at the iconography of the period – stained-glass windows, illumined devotional booklets, etc. – there is a distinct pictorial sequence of individual stories of the Bible, very similar to the progression of individual pageants within the play. These forms of image-based media were, and are, also referred to as *illuminations* because of their crucial role in "illuminating" or "enlightening" the illiterate masses; they were responsible for bringing in a familiar, human dimension to the abstract, even intangible, mysteries of the Catholic cycle. The York cycle is considered by many scholars to be another form of illuminations. As Twycross puts it, "One view sees the pageants as a picture sequence, the same in kind and intent as those of Books of Hours or stained-glass windows which feature the events of Incarnation or Passion frame by

frame: a parallel emphasised [sic.] by the framing effect of the pageant wagon."[37] Also important to remember is that "at this time there was no hard and fast line between 'literature' and 'drama': both were performance arts. Plays were described as 'quick [living] books.'"[38] Sarah Beckwith also provided an interesting argument when she wrote:

> The Corpus Christi plays of the late Middle Ages understand the sacramental relation between form and grace as *best* realized in theater. Theater is not so much inimical to the sacramental disclosure of God as the perfectly consonant form for the religion of incarnation. Precisely because sacraments are best understood as actions and not things, it is in the theater of dramatic action that they are best understood.[39]

The Corpus Christi plays, through "the resources of theater, ritual, and liturgy… narrate the Christian myth, and in this most fundamental of sense, they remember the life of Christ and the Eucharistic imperative, the invitation celebrated in the Feast of Corpus Christi: 'Do this in remembrance of me."[40]

The documentation, text, and authorship

A compilation of "'prompt copies' of the individual pageants," which were contained within a large manuscript book known as the "Register" of the Corpus Christi play, was "assembled at some time between 1463 and 1477, which happens to be exactly half way

---

[37] Ibid. 45.
[38] Ibid. 54.
[39] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) 59.
[40] Ibid. 3.

through the cycle's documented life-span."[41] Interestingly enough, it was also around this period that "the Corpus Christi play, an exclusively civic affair, began to displace the [separate] ecclesiastical procession of Corpus Christi from its own official liturgical occasion… to the day after."[42]

Another important document regarding the York cycle is known as the *Ordo Paginarum*, or the 'Order of the Pageants,' which "takes the form of a long list of the guilds that brought forth plays at Corpus Christi, the names of guilds or groups of associated guilds in a column on the left being accompanied by a brief description of the subject matter of their plays on the right."[43] The principal conclusion to be drawn from this document is essentially that the Corpus Christi cycle was established by 1415 in the city of York. Also, there "is good reason to think that the *Crucifixion* [pageant] as we now have it probably came into being in 1422."[44]

Finally, an important detail to point out is the fact that the text of the York Corpus Christi cycle was extremely dynamic and was not, nor is not, regarded as a static text to be perfunctorily performed and re-performed.[45] This detail aligns itself with the notion that, in *The Dialogical Theatre*, Max Harris presents regarding the multiplicity of performances engendered by a single text: "Each new performance," he notes, "is a new

---

[41] Richard Beadle, "The York Cycle," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre,* ed. Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 90.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid. 95.
[44] Ibid. 100.
[45] Ibid. 90.

event in the history of the meaning of the text. There is no such thing as an interpretation that is 'final' and 'definitive' in the sense of bringing that history to an end."[46]

Generally speaking, not much is known about the dramatists behind the scripts of the York cycle. It is evident that the York cycle was "the work of several dramatists from the start, and they were undoubtedly revised by others over the years but... the artistic and spiritual object of the whole and the subtle interrelatedness of the parts [remained]."[47] As William Tydeman points out, the "plays' shared evangelising purposes should never be ignored: their authors' primary business was to instruct the populace in those truths essential for their salvation by rendering them accessible."[48]

Regarding the identity of the dramatists, it is perhaps Tydeman who best summarizes the issues involved when he notes that the

> ...plays' authorship has recently come under renewed scrutiny. That the anonymous dramatists were clerks in at least minor orders and more probably fully-fledged ecclesiastics has for a long time been regarded as virtually axiomatic. It is certainly clear that within broad limits to religious authorities of the late Middle Ages bestowed their blessing on the artistic aspirations of the various guilds and craft associations sponsoring the performance of Christian drama. Indeed, if the church endorsed the cycle presentations... its cooperation in providing scripts which contained nothing inimical to the transmission of God's message of salvation would seem a natural corollary. But Lawrence Clopper has pointed out... that documentary support for clerical involvement in the cycles, as

---

[46] Max Harris. *The Dialogical Theatre: Dramatizations of the Conquest of Mexico and the Question of the Other.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 146.
[47] Beadle and King x.
[48] William Tydeman, "An introduction to medieval English theatre," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, Ed. Richard Beadle (...) 18.

> either authors or participants, has so far not been forthcoming and that in our present state of knowledge the most likely creators of the sequences appear to be the laity. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to ask whether the needful literary skills and exegetical know-how were to be readily discovered within the secular community.[49]

Economic, political, and social structures

"The organization… made use of the existing social and commercial infrastructure of the trade guilds, who put on their individual pageants from a mixture of religious devotion, civic pride, and showmanship."[50] Each guild had its specific trade and was composed of master-craftsmen. In addition, each guild was in charge of:

> …establishing standards of workmanship, administering the system of apprenticeship, and laying down the lines of demarcation between trades, the guilds also had important social characteristics and functions. The members of a guild, their families, and apprentices lived their lives partially in common, often occupying the same area of the city… They tended to worship together at the same church, and dined together [at various feasts].[51]

Pageants were typically assigned to guilds based on their skill set; for example, the Shipwrights did *The Building of the Ark* and the Bakers did *The Last Supper*.[52] Each guild was responsible for putting together every aspect of their assigned pageant, from finding actors to funding to building their wagon and so on. To assist with the regulation of these intensive tasks, each guild "elected officers known as 'pageant-masters'… whose first task it was to collect the money paid by the craftsmen towards their play, their 'pageant-silver.'"[53]

---

[49] Ibid. 25-26.
[50] Twycross 42.
[51] Beadle and King xv.
[52] See Appendix A for a complete list of guilds and their pageants.
[53] Ibid. xvi.

Beckwith responds to the long-held notion that the cycle play was a cohesive force and takes on a new, revised perspective of the York cycle. She argues that "far from unifying the city of York, the Corpus Christi festivities are intimately bound up with a divisive political regulation of labor."[54] sMore than that, the cycle also became a form of political control.

> Political power in the late medieval town… was largely an expression of economic influence. The medieval urban economy was characterized by a complex and intricate division of labor in a small-scale economy… The chief economic division in urban life was thus the one between the merchant and the manufacturing guilds. The division of labor imposed on the craft guilds was partly an expression of mercantile anxiety that feared any situation in which a chain of operations, from the acquisition of the raw material to the marketing of the final product could be undertaken by the craftsmen themselves… It was therefore essential for maintaining commercial dominance to separate [the guilds]… [thus] the system of craft organizations developed to divide and control the mercantile body.[55]

Furthermore, she also argues that to examine "Christ's body" as a symbol, instead of a theological concept, is to ask how such a symbol, or image, in effect *makes meaning* for its practitioners.[56]

> The body of Christ… serves as a symbol of the unity of the community… [serving] to reinforce social hierarchy… [However] in the Corpus Christi plays it was generally only men and boys who could assume parts. Such ceremonial occasions were about defining the boundaries of community; they were rituals of exclusion as much as rituals of inclusion.[57]

In the context of the decline of Catholicism in England, the symbolic representation of Christ's body became "less the forum for integration and social cohesion than the forum

---

[54] Beckwith, *Signifying God* 42.
[55] Ibid. 47-48.
[56] Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 3.
[57] Ibid. 34.

for social conflict."[58] This is further exemplified in the use of the cycle, by the merchant body, as a means of political control.

The Crucifixion **pageant**

The Crucifixion pageant primarily focuses on four soldiers as they work to fulfill their job and crucify Christ. In this pageant, Christ has only two speaking roles and spends most of the pageant silently lying down on the platform of the wagon, a fact that

> ...afforded to most of the audience… [a] focus of attention [falling] chiefly on the soldiers, who are not shown to be aware of their victim in any subjective sense… they describe for the audience every gruesome detail of what they're doing, [but] it is in detached terms, as a job executed by craftsmen forced to work under difficult conditions."[59]

As they work, the soldiers boast about their great work, botch their work in many ways, which results in more work. All throughout the text there is a verbal and thematic emphasis on *work*, which becomes a very important aspect of the pageant because it eventually implies that "the ignorant, physical, painful work of man in the cause of sin and death is transfigured into the sublime, spiritual work of redemption in the cause of life everlasting."[60]

---

[58] Ibid. 35.
[59] Beadle and King 211.
[60] Beadle, *The Cambridge Companion* 103.

Excerpt of The Crucifixion*, lines 97-144*[61]

1 SOLDIER: Sir knights, say, how work we now?
2 SOLDIER: Yes, certes, I hope I hold this hand,
And to the bore I have it brought
Full buxomly without band.
1 SOLDIER: Strike on then hard, for him thee bought.
2 SOLDIER: Yes, here is a stub will stiffly stand,
Through bones and sinews it shall be sought—
This work is well, I will warrand.
1 SOLDIER: Say sir, how do we there?
This bargain may not blin.
3 SOLDIER: It fails a foot and more,
The sinews are so gone in.

4 SOLDIER: I hope that mark amiss be bored.
2 SOLDIER: Then must he bide in bitter bale.
3 SOLDIER: In faith, it was over-scantily scored,
That makes it foully for to fail.
1 SOLDIER: Why carp ye so? Fast on a cord
And tug him to, by top and tail.
3 SOLDIER: Yah, thou commands lightly as a lord;
Come help to haul, with ill hail.
1 SOLDIER: Now certes that shall I do—
Full snelly as a snail.
3 SOLDIER: And I shall tache him to,
Full nimbly with a nail.

This work will hold, that dare I hete,
For now are fest fast both his hend.
4 SOLDIER: Go we all four then to his feet,
So shall our space be speedily spend.
2 SOLDIER: Let see what bourd his bale might beet,
Thereto my back now would I bend.
4 SOLDIER: Oh, this work is all unmeet—
This boring must all be amend.
1 SOLDIER: Ah, peace man, for Mahound,
Let no man wot that wonder,
A rope shall rug him down
If all his sinews go asunder.

---

[61] Beadle and King, "The Pinners – *The Crucifixion,*" *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 215-216.

2 SOLDIER: That cord full kindly can I knit,
The comfort of this carl to keel.
1 SOLDIER: Fast on then fast, that all be fit,
It is no force how fell he feel.
2 SOLDIER: Lug on ye both a little yet.
3 SOLDIER: I shall not cease, as I have sele.
4 SOLDIER: And I shall fond him for to hit.
2 SOLDIER: Oh, hale!
4 SOLDIER: Whoa, now, I hold it well.
1 SOLDIER: Have done, drive in that nail,
So that no fault be found.
4 SOLDIER: This working would not fail
If four bulls here were bound.[62]

Performance methods and audience conventions

Utilization of the reception theory approach, as a critical framework, is especially key in generating a plausible understanding of the York cycle from an audience perspective. One of the most important observations to make is the fact that the vast majority of York (and England's) society at this particular point in history was illiterate. This was a culture that was "more accustomed to hearing their literature than to reading it."[63] One point that I would add to that is that they were also accustomed to learning stories by means of a pictographic representation of some sort. As a result, the audience of the time was "in the best position to respond to the subtle patterns of emotional and conceptual interplay set up in the dramatic structures of the cycle… [as it often demanded] a finely-tuned ear for allusion, wordplay and the verbal embodiments of

[62] See Appendix B for a version with the Editors' notes over definition and meaning incorporated within the text.
[63] Beadle, *The Cambridge Companion* 100.

psychological nuance."[64] However, even though the audience "had far greater staying power in the face of both entertainment and edification" than our society today has, it seems highly unlikely that "the ordinary member of the audience, however stage-struck or devout, would watch the whole sixteen-hour play from start to finish."[65] This is especially note-worthy because it implies that although the pageants were designed to contribute to the play as a whole, they were capable of standing alone as a separate performance.

Another intriguing convention of the cycle play was its highly anachronistic nature. There was no attempt to accurately represent the clothing that soldiers during the time of Christ would have worn. Rather, the actors would have all worn clothes that, more or less, we may consider contemporary. This likely would have contributed to "an uncanny sense of being both within a specific narrative time and outside it."[66] Another anachronism would have been the actual tools the actors used onstage. When the soldier (again, wearing a costume that was current) refers to the "hammers and nails large and long,"[67] he is holding the hammers and nails used at the time. Considering the importance placed on the *Arma Christi* within *The Crucifixion*, this is an important observation because the audience would have seen tools that they recognized used in this reenactment of the crucifixion.

---

[64] Ibid.
[65] Twycross 45.
[66] Ibid. 99.
[67] Beadle and King 213.

Meg Twycross effectively points out another significant difference in theatrical conventions at the time:

> There was no need to create the 'illusion' of naturalistic theatre, the self-contained hermetically sealed world in which the characters are aware only of each other, and on which we eavesdrop. If the audience needs to know something, it is told directly. A character unselfconsciously tells the audience how he feels. He also tells you 'what he is doing at the same time as he is doing it'. Presumably this running commentary draws the audience's attentions to actions that some of them might not be able to see: it also adds an emphasis to significant action, as in the York *Crucifixion*….[68]

In the York *Crucifixion* pageant, direct address is used several times, even in a comical fashion. For example, in response to being told to hurry, one of the soldiers turns to the audience and states that he will complete his work "full snelly as a snail," i.e. very slowly.[69] This use of direct address, which the audience would have presumably laughed at, seemed to be a very effective method of garnering the emotional identification of the audience to the soldiers and not to Christ. This formation of a relationship based upon a "misidentification," if you will, contributes to the emotional power of a later direct address. In this pageant, Christ speaks only twice. The second speech, when Christ is on the cross after it has been raised, is a prime example of this mode of direct address.[70] Here, the dramatist

> ...turns the tables on the audience… and [they] realize that in their laughter at the awkward efforts of four local workmen, they have been seduced into condoning the Crucifixion. The tenor of Christ's address to 'all men that walk by way or street', combined with the visual impact [of Christ on the cross], makes it plain that… the Crucifixion is an act in which all men at all times are necessarily implicated.[71]

---

[68] Twycross 54.
[69] Beadle, *York Mystery Plays* 215.
[70] Twycross 55.
[71] Beadle, *York Mystery Plays* 211-212.

This moment of direct address also reveals the primary motivation of the York cycle as sacramental theater, as direct address is "an essential feature of the movement of popular piety that sought to bring the individual into a personal relationship with Christ, suffering for his pain, and loving him for his love shown to us."[72]

Another observation is that the actors are active members of their local community. The audience is watching their neighbors, their fathers, their drinking buddies, and so on. With as much as a tenth of the city involved in the production of the cycle, a person in the audience would have likely known at least one person on the stage. The audience would watch these Pinners they knew perform a story about soldiers crucifying Christ, which begs the question of whether or not this familiarity would have contributed to a realistic nature of the pageant or not. It does, however, certainly make it more immediate and relevant to the audience. On a slightly different note, in York alone, there were

> ...at least twenty-two actors playing Christ… In performance, it creates an extremely strong sense of the role itself, detached from any one performer. This happens – not totally accidentally – to mesh very well with medieval views on the relationship between 'images' (pictures or statues) and the sacred persons and truths they represent. The actor, as image, does not become but represents the person he plays.[73]

What is particularly interesting is that there is almost a certain poetic irony at work here. Christ, being "fully God," is himself an actor so to speak. Christ is the manifestation of

---

[72] Twycross 55.
[73] Twycross 42-43.

God on earth; in a sense, as men play the role of God, Christ is God playing the role of Man.

The decline of the York Cycle

In the late 16th century, the notion of acting as representation, however, becomes reversed and regarded as a blasphemous attempt to imitate and contain the uncontainable God in the wake of Henry VIII's separation from the Roman Catholic Church and the establishment of the Church of England.[74] Beckwith put it best when she eloquently wrote:

> ...the very form of this remembering [of Christ] became profoundly alarming when it embarrassed and betrayed reformed understandings of representation: Corpus Christi theater became idolatrous… when the actor's act was understood to be scandalously imitating rather than gestically signifying God. Religious theater… [became] a betrayal and not a revelation of the mysteries of the faith.[75]

This view of an idolatrous, traitorous religious theater created a wave of antagonism between the church and theater, particularly in America, that would last for the next four centuries.

However, one still has to wonder what was really at the heart of this transition. Was it really the relatively simple establishment of the new church or was it, perhaps, something deeper? Was it, as Shlain attests, the result of a change in the brain's actual structure – a biological rewiring of the neural pathways of those English persons who

---

[74] Beckwith, *Signifying God* 3.
[75] Ibid.

managed to acquire literacy?[76] After all, there is a definitive correlation, to say the least, between the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1450 and the rise of the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1517.

Shlain makes a fascinating case for the existence of an age-old conflict between written words and images when he argues that the 16th century Reformation was actually the fourth protestant (in the literal sense of a "protester") reformation in the history of Western culture. The first revolt occurred roughly "thirty-eight hundred years ago when desert people [the Israelites] revolted against the florid icon worship of Egyptian polytheism," which occurred at about the same time that the Old Testament appeared.[77] Shlain does not mention this specifically, but it is true (according the Bible) that the Ten Commandments do not appear until Exodus 20 *after* the Israelites crossed the Red Sea to escape from the Egyptians in Exodus 15. The next reformation was about two thousand years later (and ago) in the midst of the artistically thriving Roman Empire when the first Christians appeared, armed with the New Testament.[78] The third reformation was the birth of Islam and the emergence of "the West's third sacred alphabetic book, the Quran."[79] Clearly, the fourth and most-widely-recognized reformation differs from its so-called predecessors in the sense that a fourth sacred book did not appear alongside it.

---

[76] Shlain viii.
[77] Ibid. 323.
[78] Ibid. 323-324.
[79] Ibid. 324.

Rather, the crux of this particular Protestant revolt "concerned alphabet literacy: who should be allowed to read and interpret the sacred book?"[80]

Just to quickly reiterate Shlain's thesis, he argues that the rise of literacy within a society typically manifests not only as a patriarchal, law-driven culture, but also as a "decline in the status of images, women's rights, and goddess worship."[81] The York Cycle was but one aspect, albeit a very important aspect, of an intensely Catholic, image-driven culture. In order to establish even further the religious context surrounding the York Cycle, a quick review of the Roman Catholic Church seems particularly appropriate. Even today, the structure is obviously extremely patriarchal; only men can be priests, called "Fathers," and the entirety of the Church is topped by a father-figure in the most revered position a mere man can hold, the Pope, who has the final word and is second only to God (supposedly). Not only did the Catholic Church seem to encourage an oral culture within its laypeople – with Latin services, stained glass windows, the crucifix, the York Cycle, and a constant veneration of the Virgin Mary as a sort of canonical goddess – the Church closely safeguarded its literacy. Shlain describes these protective methods in more detail:

> The Catholic Church maintained that only a few higher echelon priests who knew Latin were in a position to understand it [the sacred book, i.e. the Bible]. The pope had the final word. During the medieval period, the Church closely guarded the New Testament, which was not circulated among the faithful. More often than not, copies were chained to monastery desks or kept behind locked doors.[82]

---

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid. viii.
[82] Ibid. 324-325.

Indeed, reformers knew that their first step was to "wrest the written text away from the elite group of priests who were holding it hostage so that people could not read Christ's words for themselves."[83] Is Shlain's use of the word "hostage" extreme? Perhaps, but perhaps not; after all, it is not like the deep suspicion of both the Catholic Church and anything remotely iconographic went away overnight. It became deeply entrenched in the hearts and minds of Protestant Englishmen – and later Americans – as Chapter III will clearly indicate.

[83] Ibid. 326.

CHAPTER III

AMERICA

In 1548, the Feast of Corpus Christi was suppressed, resulting in the almost immediate cessation of annual cycle plays throughout England. In her book *Sacred Players* (2007), Heather Hill-Vasquez argues that, rather than completely doing away with all forms of drama, there was an attempt by Protestants to "reclaim, remake, and recycle the drama of the earlier faith."[84] In 2002, while he does not go as in depth as Hill-Vasquez, Glynne Wickham wrote that, for a time during the late sixteenth century, the Protestant reformers continued to use drama for devotional and instructional ends, so long as it continued to serve as a useful instrument of propaganda for their own cause.[85] However, unlike Hill-Vasquez, Wickham also pointed out that the "only other [theatrical] dynamic on the horizon, however, was commercial; and with the accession of Elizabeth I the play as entertainment, governed by the professional actor rather than by the clerical play-maker, was beginning to eclipse the play as celebration."[86] In *Church and Stage* (2008), one of my primary sources influencing this thesis, Claudia Durst Johnson picks up on the implication that a slippery-slope argument was beginning to emerge by the early seventeenth century. She writes that for most of the sixteenth century, the "objections raised by various clergymen against the theatre were restricted to particular stage

---

[84] Heather Hill-Vasquez, *Sacred Players: The Politics of Response in the Middle English Religious Drama* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007) 7.
[85] Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages: 1300 to 1660* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 169.
[86] Ibid.

practices... But after 1603, objections began to be raised by a variety of clergymen to all theatre on principle, including all plays."[87] This was the environment from which the New World Calvinists would emigrate.

Puritanism in the New World

The reign of Elizabeth I established a sort of religious middle ground between Catholicism and Protestantism within the Church of England, a decision that found opposition among the more radical Protestants, a quarrelsome group of dissidents that became known as the Puritans. As a whole, the Puritans believed that the reformation of Church of England had only just begun and that reform was still possible from within the Church. However, a subset of Puritans known as the Separatists held that if there were to be any further reform, it would have to come from outside the established Church of England. In addition to escaping from the religious persecution and ridicule encountered in England, it was this belief that sparked the Puritans' motivation to settle in the New World in 1620. By 1630, John Winthrop, an influential Puritan leader, stated that the goal of the Puritans would be to encourage religious reform by becoming a "city on a hill," that is, leading by example. It is important to note that the Puritans in the New World were vastly different from the Puritans that remained in England. Johnson writes that the "Calvinists who descended on the New World... put their English counterparts in

---

[87] Claudia Durst Johnson, *Church and Stage: The Theatre as Target of Religious Condemnation in Nineteenth Century America* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008) 15.

the shade when it came to intolerance."[88] That is not to say that English Puritans were not intolerant. In fact, on September 2, 1642, English Puritans succeeded in officially closing theatres and then proceeded to keep them closed for the next eighteen years until 1660. However, even these English Puritans

> ...actually expressed how appalled they were at the extremes to which their New England co-religionists carried their particular doctrines and behavior, especially their intolerance... [To New England Puritans, tolerance] was sinful, weak, and made God angry. If you wanted to please God and have Him further the prosperity of New England, you needed to root out, banish, and punish any behavior that you believed might offend the Lord."[89]

Johnson goes on to describe exactly how extreme this removal of potentially offensive behavior for New World Puritans was and why the mere existence of theatre in New England was such an impossibility that legal prohibition was unnecessary.

> Stage plays were not only unthinkable in New England's Puritan world, where church and state were one, but even the church service, once known for its thunderous anthems, hypnotic chants, and ornate art, had to be expunged of all theatrical elements. Anything that might in any way allow the sense and emotions to run amok had to be monitored carefully. The church building itself had to be plain and unadorned, with no icons, no stained glass, no statues that might please the eye and distract from the sermon. The only music was to be unaccompanied, sing-song renditions of the Psalms, with no pleasing melody so as not to allow the congregation to be carried away emotionally.[90]

These extent of these measures, particularly the removal of music, clearly represent a movement that transcended mere iconoclasm. Just as Christianity has its roots within Judaism, so too does iconoclasm. Iconoclasm emerged as a response to several of God's commandments, namely the first four.

---

[88] Ibid. 16.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

> I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.... [91]

Throughout Jewish tradition, priority is often given to "ear over eye in their respective capacities as media of instruction, enlightenment and the construction of perception; conversely, as the media of deception, illusion and abuse."[92] In a nutshell, the belief is that the eye is especially vulnerable to danger and temptation and therefore, one's reliance upon it in relation to God should be minimized as much as possible. With the removal of any pleasing melodies, it stands to reason that the Puritan movement not only focused on the eye as a source of potential temptation but also upon the ear. In *Religion in the New World*, Richard E. Wentz, attempts to lend some insight into the psychology of the Puritan mind by highlighting the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) who wrote of an invisible and visible church.

> The invisible church was that body of true Christ-people known only to God. This was the pure church, which included those living, dead, or unborn, who were chosen through Christ. However, there was the visible church of all those who in some way professed to know God in Christ... To subscribe to this interpretation of what God accomplishes in Jesus Christ is to face at least two alternatives. On the one hand, inasmuch as the distinction between visible and invisible church is known only to God, perhaps we should go about our Christian devotion and responsibilities and leave the final judgment to God. On the other hand, if the invisible church presents a mandate to become as visible as possible, we may conclude that true Christians must become visible: they must be separate and unspotted from the world.[93]

---

[91] Exodus 20: 2-5a (New International Version)
[92] Lionel Kochan, *Beyond the Graven Image: A Jewish View* (New York: New York University Press, 1997) 7.
[93] Qtd. in Richard E. Wentz, *Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 64.

The Puritans were already separated from the rest of the world, and in their minds, their extreme measures of anything pleasing constituted "visible practices" that obscured the true church. Therefore, they "advocated a church purified of these ritual embellishments, and believed that simple preaching and unadorned sacraments would result in pure Christian living."[94] In the Puritan world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, theatre was not only viewed as merely incompatible, but was considered to be the epitome of a violation and betrayal of the faith. Unlike the Church of England, there was no possibility for reform in the theatre. Even the mere act of going to see a play constituted the worst sin against Calvinist work ethic, that of idleness; according to Johnson, those involved in "theatrical activities were neither glorifying God nor benefiting man: they were idlers... let us not forget that an idle mind was the devil's workshop, wherein carnal desires were hatched."[95] It took over 40 years for theatre to emerge, starting with *Ye Bear and Ye Cubb* in Virginia. However, it was not until theatre began to gain a foothold in the New World – first in South Carolina in 1703, then in New York in 1732 – that anti-theatrical legislation began to emerge. In 1750, ninety years after Puritans in England repealed the ban on theatres, a stage performance managed to slip by the magistrates in Boston and "this atrocity set off riots in the streets of Boston, [provoking] the General Court of Massachusetts to enact further legislation forbidding playacting, even making playgoers subject to fines."[96] It is evident that the influence of Puritanism in the New World was clearly a potent one.

---

[94] Wentz 65.
[95] Johnson 26.
[96] Ibid. 21-22.

In their own words

In 1684, an article, which was written collectively by the "Ministers of Christ at Boston in New-England," and entitled "An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing," was published. Within this article are a series of pleas in favor of dancing followed by returning arguments against dancing, such as this one:

> Plea 3. Children are much pleased with this exercise. Ans. That we believe: But if it suit with their corrupt natures, that's a sign it is evil. No doubt but that if a Stage play were set up, many Children would be as much pleased with it, as now they are with the Dance. If a Blasphemer shall tell them, There's as good Divinity to be learned by a Play as by the Scripture itself, perhaps they may be debauched into the belief of it, if ever they should see Scripture-stories acted in a Play, which is indeed a profane Practice common amongst the Papists, but prohibited in Reformed Churches under pain of the highest censure. The Lord saith, Seek not after your own heart and your own wayes, after which you use to go an whoring, Numb. 15:35.[97]

Another American document – written by John Phillips and published over 100 years later in 1798 – was called *Familiar Dialogues on Dancing, Between a Minister and a Dancer, Taken From Matter of Fact with an Appendix Containing Some Extracts from the Writings of Pious and Eminent Men Against the Entertainment of the Stage, and Other Vain Amusements Recommended to the Perusal of Christians of Every Denomination.*[98] This document follows the structure of a logic argument that presents a "Dialogue" between two (or more) parties, but is written by only one author. For

---

[97] Mather, Increase. "An Arrow against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing, Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures. By the Ministers of Christ at Boston in New-England." Boston: S. Green, 1684. N. pag. Microform. *Texas A&M University Libraries* American Culture Series (n.d.): film b 1512 reel 50.6.

[98] John Phillips. "Familiar Dialogues on Dancing..." New York: T. Kirk, 1798. N. pag. Microform. *Texas A&M University Libraries* American Culture Series (n.d.): film b 1512 reel 50.10.

example, at one point the Dancer claims "Had you been a member of the Church of England, you would approve dancing yourself." Then, in a rather lengthy response, the Minister states,

> I was also a member of the Church of England, but on mature deliberation, saw that I could not partake at the Lord's table, and at the table of devils. I mean that I could not attend balls, plays, cards, &c. and then, by a feigned repentance, under the mask of religion, pretend to shew forth our Lord's death, by coming to his table. Your seeing no evil in what you do, is no proof of your innocence, for the God of this world, viz. (the devil,) may have blinded your mind, and your conscious may be so hardened, that you see no evil in anything that comports with the gratification of your carnal mind which is enmity against God....
>
> I call [dancing] vain amusement; because it does not answer the end.
>
> Amusement is nearly the same as diversion. Now diversion properly speaking, is intended to relieve the body, or mind, from the severity of too intense labours; that after this relief, we may resume our labours with greater advantage. But dancing will not do this, for it rather fatigues, and dissipates our powers, than revives and strengthens them, hence it is that however unfit for labour persons have been before dancing, they have been abundantly more so after it. Again I call it an idle amusement, because it originates in idleness, and is generally followed by idle persons.[99]

The Appendix of this document contains still more venomous remarks against the ills of the theatre:

> FROM CHIEF JUSTICE HALE.
>
> Beware of too much recreation. Some bodily exercise is necessary, for sedentary men especially; but let it not be too frequent, nor too long. Gaming, taverns, and plays, as they are pernicious, and corrupt youth, so, if they had no other fault, they are justly to be declined, in respect to their excessive expense of time, and habituating men to idleness and vain thoughts, and disturbing passions and symptoms, when they are past, as well as while they are used.
>
> ---
>
> CLARKE, in his essay on study, speaking of plays and romances, says, 'By what I have seen of them, I believe they are generally very indiscreetly and foolishly written, in a way proper to recommend vanity and wickedness, rather than discredit them; they have a strong tendency to corrupt and debauch the mind with

[99] Ibid.

> silly, mischievous notions of love and honor, and other things relating to the conduct of life.'
>
> ---
>
> ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON, mentioning plays, says, 'They are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a civilized, much less a Christian nation: they do most notoriously minister to vice and infidelity; by their profaneness, they are apt to instill bad principles into the minds of men and to lessen that awe and reverence which all men ought to have of God and religion; and by their lewdness, they teach vice, and are apt to infect the minds of men, and dispose them to lewd and dissolute practices.'
>
> ... 'some parents are... evil indeed, who train up their children for ruin and destruction... and instead of bringing them to God's church, they carry them to play-houses, and places of debauchery, those schools and nurseries of lewdness and vice.'
>
> ---
>
> *The following are taken from the Works of WILLIAM LAW*
>
> CAN any one think that he has a true Christian spirit, that his heart is changed as it ought to be, whilst he is diverting himself with the polished lewdness, profaneness, and impure discourses of the stage? Can he think that he is endeavoring to be holy, as Christ is holy, to live by his wisdom, and be full of his spirit, so long as he allows himself in such entertainments?[100]

Nineteenth century America

After 1800, the separation of church from state was enacted on the federal level (and completed on the state level in 1833) at which point, the church had no legal support in its anti-theatre effort. However, the hostility was by no means lessened because "the theatre was perceived as being anathema to all the religious values and virtues so fundamental to the prevailing Victorian society."[101] That being said, Johnson points out

---

[100] Johnson 34-35.
[101] Ibid. 28-29.

that as early as 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the church was "an unofficial institution that could pervade and direct multiple diverse segments of American life."[102] In Tocqueville's own words, religion in America "must be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions in that country.... I am certain that they [Americans] hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions. This opinion is not peculiar to a class of citizens or to a party, but it belongs to the whole nation, and to every rank of society."[103] Johnson more than adequately presents evidence to establish the influence and power of the Protestant Church in nineteenth-century society and that the clergymen who preached against the stage, such as Henry Ward Beecher and Timothy Dwight (the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, were "the most educated and illustrious figures of their time, who brought to the excoriation of the theatre an explosive rhetoric that they lent to little else."[104] While Johnson does point out that the secular theatre did, in fact, thrive "as what was then understood to be a tainted underside of a society,"[105] she fails to address the reasons why it flourished despite such hostile attacks by the Protestant Church, which she argues was "the most powerful force"[106] in nineteenth-century America. If it were indeed so powerful, why did it fail to suppress the influence and popularity of the theatre?

---

[102] Ibid. 29.
[103] Qtd. in Johnson 29-30.
[104] Johnson 37.
[105] Ibid. 28.
[106] Ibid. 37.

The industrial revolution

My suspicion is that the rise of secular theatre can largely be attributed to the rise of the industrial revolution that began in the early nineteenth century (namely in 1815-1848) and transformed the American economy. The expansion of the market economy fueled the growth of urbanization and economic growth was "spurred by new technologies that made agriculture more productive and factories more efficient, as well as improvements in transportation and communication."[107] Even as the secular theatre was becoming increasingly popular, there were also improvements in print technology that "sharply reduced the cost of publishing.... Between 1825 and 1840 the value of the American book business [not including the revenue from newspapers and magazines] doubled to $5.5 million."[108]

Other radical changes caused by the industrial revolution were the modifications in work culture. One such modification was the transition to a new work rhythm, which required factory workers to follow a "strict schedule and perform at a steady pace day in and day out."[109] Previously, a person's work cycled through stages; there were rush periods separated by long breaks, when individuals had plenty of time to pursue other interests and hobbies. Under this new work rhythm, however, there was never quite as much time to "play hard." The second adjustment was that the new system established a sharp division between home and workplace [at least for men, anyway]. By 1840, roughly

---

[107] Jennifer D. Keene, Saul Cornell, Edward T. O'Donnell, *Visions of America to 1877: A History of the United States*, vol. 1 (n.p.: Prentice Hall, 2009) 252.
[108] Ibid. 259.
[109] Ibid. 260.

two-thirds of workers lived in one place and worked in another.[110] This, in particular, implies two things: increased travel time and, possibly, a temporary "escape" for husbands from their wives. Although this is purely speculative, it seems plausible that for some of these men (who were working away from home and their wives and in need of a new pastime) might have passed by a theatre or two along their travel route home. What is more certain though was the changing urban landscape. Prior to 1820, one out of ten people lived in a city (defined as containing more than 2,500 people), but by 1860, that number had doubled and fully 20% of Americans were urbanites.[111] A relatively obvious consequence to this is the fact that more and more Americans were gaining easier access to the theatre; or, rather, to use one of its euphemisms, Americans were gaining access to the "museum" as several clever theatrical entrepreneurs, most notably P.T. Barnum, took to calling themselves as the nineteenth century progressed. This rise in urban population, however, was not purely the result of American migration from rural areas, but also the result of European immigration. In fact, the numbers are actually pretty staggering; in 1830, approximately 23,000 Europeans immigrated into America, but by 1854, that number was 428,000 individuals.[112] In other words, within 24 years, the rate of immigration increased by a factor of 18.6 (or 2,000%). As impressive as that number is, the more important result of this immigration was the changing of America's ethnic composition. 43% of these immigrants were Irish, who

---

[110] Ibid. 260-261.
[111] Ibid. 264.
[112] Ibid. 266.

were almost entirely Catholic, and 27% were Germans, who were both Catholics and Protestants.[113]

Another important outcome resulting from the increased immigration and industrialization was the "steady increase in the number of single men living outside of traditional family units," which by the 1840s and 1850s had reached a proportion of "at least 30% of male urban dwellers."[114] That is not to say that men lived by themselves; on the contrary, most these men opted to live in boardinghouses. It quickly became evident that this "masculine subculture" living without a constant influx of American family values, as they were, was resulting in a substantial rise in prostitution, a fact that alarmed many officials and, presumably, clergymen. It certainly did not help that theatres "encouraged prostitutes to attend their performances as a means of boosting sales, a practice so common that the cheap seats they occupied were dubbed the 'guilty third tier.'"[115] There was even a bar directly located on this third tier. Understandably, this practice was also responsible for fueling the drive of clergymen against the theatre and was widely regarded by the population as, by far, their most credible argument.

---

[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid. 268.
[115] Ibid.

Nineteenth century America – Reframed

As I have previously suggested – to better understand the causes behind the pervasive hostilities between the Church and Theatre – it is best to view Shlain's dichotomic paradigm as existing on a spectrum between Word and Image. (Fig. 1)

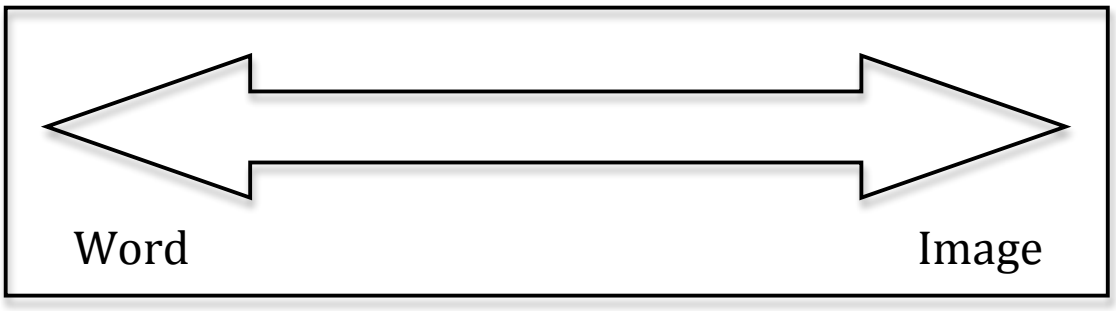

Figure 1. The Dichotomic Paradigm (2010). (Diagram by Jennifer Purdy.)

The events of the 19th century collectively seem to indicate that the more extreme a culture becomes, on one side or the other, the more intense the hostility. A comparison of the English Puritans with the New World Puritans lends credence to this statement's validity. Both clearly emerged from the same set of circumstances – the decline of the Catholic, image-centric York Cycle, which occurred alongside the rise of literacy and the Protestant Reformation. However, the hostilities seem to have lessened between the theatre and English Puritans by 1660, when Parliament repealed the ban on theatres. In all likelihood, there was still some remnant of bad blood between the two parties, but, at the very least, their relationship had certainly improved.

English sentimental drama

The term sentimental drama refers to eighteenth-century drama and is derived from "the belief of eighteenth-century playwrights, actors, and spectators in Europe that human nature was innately good and that both personal and social bonds would thrive if individuals were true to their innate virtues."[116] This form of theatre first rose to popularity in London around the turn of the eighteenth century. Like America, the English had been through a moral war "against the art and the whole theatre profession... [which had been] accused of threatening the moral welfare of the nation."[117] Along with Joseph Addison, Richard Steele "set out the moral majority program for a national theatre of virtue in their newspapers."[118] Steel campaigned to replace "Restoration comedy, with its cynical wit and erotic interest, with comedy reflecting the new values, and he carried this out in his own very popular play, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722)."[119] Steele, who wrote England's most popular comedies, often devised them "to reward virtue and correct (as opposed to punishing) vices."[120]

In contrast, for the New World Puritans – who were more clearly leftist, iconoclastic, and Word-centric – the war against the rightist, Image-centric theatre would rage on for yet another two centuries. On page 43, Johnson writes that even if "a play had a moral

---

[116] Zarilli et. al. 216.
[117] Ibid. 236.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid. 218.
[120] Michael L. Greenwald, Roger Schultz, and Roberto D. Pomo. *The Longman Anthology of Drama and Theater: A Global Perspective*. Revised 1st ed. (New York: Longman, 2001) 677.

message and represented the triumph of virtue over vice, the mere fact that it was presented in dramatic form obviated [or negated] any Christian value it might have." Given each party's extreme position on the spectrum – but at the same time, each party's powerful influence upon society – the implication seems to be that these hostilities emerged and then were sustained because of a societal inability to reconcile these cultures unless they remained firmly compartmentalized.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the theatre was still thriving despite the continued dominant influence of the church in American society. For all intents and purposes, it appeared as though both sides remained at an impasse, which perhaps they were. Both continued to have an audience, although whether a significant number of spectators within these audiences were shared is another question entirely. It is a question that Johnson addresses, however brief it may be, and writes that there is "no denying that many businessmen and even churchgoers frequented stage performances, but definitely without the blessing or knowledge of their pastors."[121] At any rate, one thing was irrevocably clear; neither side was willing to cave in.

Johnson's Argument – the winding down of an old war[122]

Johnson mentions that some scholars contend that the presentation of moral drama was a factor in smoothing the relationship between the church and theatre, but argues that even though some clergymen had reversed their outlook on the subject and became more

---

[121] Johnson 8.
[122] Ibid. 159.

convinced that the "theatre *could* be an agent for moral instruction," the change in attitude could not solely be attributed to this.[123] Indeed, there was certainly a trend in which, about once a decade, there would be a play so special, moral, and virtuous that even the religious masses would be "drawn into the theatre for the first time to witness it."[124] By far the most notable of these decennial spectacles, ironically enough, was the melodramatic adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The irony stems from the fact that Harriet Beecher Stowe was Lyman Beecher's daughter and Henry Ward Beecher's sister, both of whom were extremely influential and well-respected ministers who spoke out tirelessly about the evils of the theatre. However, Johnson primarily attributes the church's eventual acceptance of the theatre to two different events: the assassination of President Lincoln in a theatre in 1865, and the refusal of an Episcopalian minister to bury an actor from his church.[125] She argues that these two "particularly notorious crises in this period brought the conflict between the church and members of the profession into the light for public scrutiny and self-appraisal."[126]

Lincoln's assassination

In April 1865, an actor from a very well known American theatre family, John Wilkes Booth, assassinated Present Abraham Lincoln with a single shot to the head. Apparently, as Booth leapt to the stage, the reaction of the audience and the crowds that

---

[123] Ibid. 160-161.
[124] Ibid. 161.
[125] Ibid. 7.
[126] Ibid. 163.

gathered was not directed only toward Booth, but rather to burn the theatre and to kill the actors.[127] Indeed, the public reaction to "actors [and, by extension, the theatre] after the tragedy reinforced, and was reinforced by, the church's long-standing animosity."[128] Certainly, that seems to be a valid statement; I have no qualms about it. However, despite this mutual anti-theatrical reinforcement, by January 1866 – a mere nine months later – "much of the public, at least in New York City, was ready to forget the theatre's implication in the assassination: With an unexpectedly warm ovation, Edwin Booth [the brother of John Wilkes] was welcomed back to the stage in a gesture simultaneously personal and symbolic."[129] In my opinion, I have to say that Johnson's argument here seems somewhat insubstantial; in many ways, this event seems to be more of a correlation rather than causation.

The burial refusal

In 1870, the Rev. W.T. Sabine of the Episcopalian church, despite his initial agreement, refused to bury George Holland upon being informed that Holland had been an actor. A friend of Holland's, Joseph Jefferson, who had been asked by the Holland family to speak with their minister, wrote a detailed account of the incident:

> I at once started in quest of the minister, taking one of the sons of Holland with me. On arriving at the house [of the pastor] I explained to the reverend the nature of my visit, and the arrangements were made for the time and place at which the funeral was to be held. Something, I can scarcely say what, gave me the impression that I had better mention that Mr. Holland was an actor. I did so in a few words, and concluded by presuming that probably this fact would make no

[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid. 166.
[129] Ibid. 167.

> difference. I saw, however, by the restrained manner of the minister and an unmistakable change in the expression of his face that it would make, at least to him, a great deal of difference. After some hesitation he said that he would be compelled, if Mr. Holland had been an actor, to decline holding the service at the church. While his refusal to perform the funeral rites for my old friend would have shocked under ordinary circumstances, the fact that it was made in the presence of the dead man's son was more painful than I can describe. I turned to look at the youth and saw that his eyes were filled with tears.[130]

The incident galvanized friends of the theatre and, later the overall public, and sparked them into action. It even led to Mark Twain writing an article, "A Live Parson is Worth More Than a Dead Actor," in which he chooses not to mince his words and, therefore, makes his opinion of the Rev. Sabine, indeed, very clear; to be specific, Johnson quotes this particular excerpt labeling "the Reverend Sabine a 'crawling, slimy, sanctimonious, self-righteous reptile."[131]

That being said, even Johnson herself writes that this was, by no means, the first incident of its type. It was simply the first to garner such a reaction. All Johnson seems to attribute this difference to is that "...in the case of Holland, friends of the theatre decided that enough was enough."[132] Initially, the idea of such an immediate one-eighty by the general public toward the church, in a sort of universally felt indignant response on Holland's behalf, and effectively neutralizing its hostility of the theatre overnight is attractive. Certainly, the potential for an emotional response is high upon hearing the

---

[130] Qtd. in, Johnson 167; and, originally, Joseph Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson* (New York: New Century Co., 1889) 252, 253.
[131] Ibid. 171.
[132] Ibid. 167.

story of a young boy who learns that his father, whom he loved dearly, would not be buried because he was an actor.

There is only one problem with this argument. This is not a cause, nor is it a precursor or even a catalyst; it is an *effect*. In order for such a response of unified action to have occurred, the notion of feeling sympathy for the plight of the actor had to have already seeped into the minds of a "critical mass" of people within the society. For that matter, in order for such a societal level of sympathy to emerge for one so universally scorned as the actor, the seeds of hatred – which had been so carefully cultivated for centuries – had to have already withered away and disintegrated. Whatever it was that led to this breakdown of hostilities, it was not the result of Sabine's refusal to bury Holland. Personally, I think there is a deeper, underlying reason for the undermining of clergy arguments against the stage – particularly with the decline of the third tier, the improved reputation of the actor, and the improvement in audience behavior – and, ultimately, for the change in societal and religious attitude toward the theatre and the cessation of hostilities.

The winding down of an old war – Rewound

Shlain refers to the nineteenth century as the point in time in which yet another major cultural shift was set into motion. He refers to this period as the Iconic Revolution and points to the discovery of electromagnetism in 1831 and to the invention of photography in 1839. If the Iconic Revolution was responsible for generating the hegemonic domino

effect between the church and theatre, was it also responsible for progressively mitigating the pervasive antagonism of the Word-versus-Image symptom of literacy that was so heavily apparent throughout the nineteenth century? Furthermore, is there any evidence indicating a reversal of those effects – a decline in the status of images, women's rights, and goddess worship – which Shlain argues are manifested within a purely literate society?

The return of the Image

Photography did for the Image what the printing press had done for the Word; it made photographic reproduction relatively inexpensive and commercially available for the masses.[133] Consider, for example, the estimate that there are well over 17 million copies of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (1888), making it the single-most-reproduced art image. Without the technological innovation of photography, that number would perhaps be closer to 1,700 copies than 17 million.

Although photography quickly overshadowed this technique, the use of lithography (the reproduction of images via engraving), which had been perfected in the 1820s, also contributed to the Iconic Revolution.[134] There is no denying the ability of an image to communicate a concept quickly and effectively, often more so than words, hence the well-known proverb, "An image is worth a thousand words." By the late nineteenth century, people were becoming more and more accustomed to receiving information

[133] Shlain 383.
[134] Ibid.

through images, tilting culture away from the printed word. Shlain uses a perfect example of this when he points out that "[political] cartoons began to appear regularly in the newspapers of the day and were often more to the point than the wordy editorials that accompanied them."[135] However, this is not to say that Word technologies did not continue to grow and thrive; they clearly did. With the many improvements in road and river transportation, communication in any form only became more efficient.

The rise of the Woman's Rights Movement

The nineteenth century was a period of many changes, not the least of which was the evolution of the Woman Movement, which "developed in response to women's dependent situation. It promoted a series of new images for women: True Womanhood, Real Womanhood, Public Womanhood, and New Womanhood.[136] Cruea examines these images as "*overlapping* parts of a long-term change in cultural attitudes towards gender, a gradual shifting of power away from its patriarchal basis, and a steady movement for women toward twentieth- century feminism.[137]

During the 1820s to 1840s, the first ideal of True Womanhood designated the women's sphere of control as existing within the home, especially within the new, rising middle class. As mentioned previously, the Industrial Revolution initiated the fundamental

---

[135] Shlain 384.
[136] Susan M. Cruea, "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement," *ATQ**ns19.***3 (2005): 187. *WilsonWeb Humanities Full Text,* Texas A&M U, Evans Lib., Web. 3 Apr. 2010.
[137] Ibid. 187-188. (Emphasis mine.)

separation of the workplace away from the home. This new ideal of domesticity placed women in charge of "instilling the values of piety, family, and sexual passivity."[138] Furthermore, a "True Woman" was assigned as the "symbolic keeper of morality and decency within the home, being regarded as innately superior to men when it came to virtue."[139] This view of a True Woman fits, and not accidentally, with the prevailing Victorian values that were promoted by the church and its mainstream religious public. Among these values were an "insistence on concealment, order, tradition, self-control, self-denial, industry, and rigid class stratification..."[140] Furthermore, good "habits, genteel manners, and a predictable routine were signs of moral stability in the sacrosanct home."[141] Cruea succinctly summarizes the expected roles of men and women in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, when she writes that in a "rapidly changing world where men were charged with the task of creating and expanding an industrialized civilization from a wilderness, a True Woman was expected to serve as the protectress of religion and civilized society."[142]

Although the sphere of a True Woman was initially restricted to the home and therefore could be interpreted as yet another step in the continued oppression of women within a literate society, in the end, it played a crucial role in laying the "groundwork for the later development of feminism by crediting women with a moral authority which implicitly

---

[138] Keene, et al. 295.
[139] Cruea 188.
[140] Johnson 31.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Cruea 188.

empowered them to extend their moral influence outside the home."[143] In addition to the increased female activity within the church, the belief in their "moral superiority to men also empowered them to attempt to right the wrongs, especially alcoholism and prostitution [both found within theaters of the time], inflicted on society by sinful men."[144]

However, as time went on, it soon became clear that the ideal of True Womanhood was unrealistic and inherently unobtainable for the majority of nineteenth-century American women, especially of the working class, where "women operated machines, worked the fields, hand-washed clothing, and toiled over great kitchen stoves."[145] The massive economic changes in America – the commercialization, industrialization, and urbanization – led to a mass exodus of young men from rural areas, thereby limiting the marital opportunities of women and forcing many to seek employment.[146] Finally, the eruption of the Civil War in the 1860s cemented the creation of a new ideal because it "forced many women to forsake True Womanhood in order to fill positions left vacant by men who had gone off to fight... [taking] on the roles of teachers, office workers, government workers, and store clerks."[147] As a result, the ideal of "Real Womanhood"

---

143 Ibid. 190.
144 Ibid.
145 William L. O'Neill, *Feminism in America: A History.* 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989) 7-8. Qtd. in Cruea 190.
146 Cruea 190.
147 Ibid. 191.

began to emerge; this ideal "permitted women a minor degree of independence, and stressed economic self-sufficiency...."[148]

The emergence of the Public Woman was not far behind that of the Real Woman due to the fact that several economic opportunities increasingly began to take middle-class women outside of the home. Furthermore, during this phase, women "strove to gain legal visibility in order to protect their interests materially."[149] It is important to remember that the existence of these ideals overlapped each other. The female struggle for legal visibility was taking place even in the decades before the Civil War. In 1837, for example, Thomas Herttell introduced a bill into the New York legislature that would eventually become a landmark married women's property act, which allowed women to retain control of their inherited property.[150] This bill is vastly important due to the fact that, before this time, women had few, if any, legal rights in America. Even so, the bill took eleven years before it was finally passed into law in 1848. The Public Woman ideal also "allowed women to become engaged in the cultural realm. Writing professionally, for instance, not only enabled women respectably to earn an income, but also enabled women to do important cultural work... The popularity of the novel enabled a great number of women to contribute their voices to a traditionally male-dominated culture..."[151]

---

[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid. 193.
[150] Keene, et al. 297.
[151] Cruea 196.

The highlight of the Public Woman phase – and the Woman's Rights Movement of the nineteenth century as a whole – was the Seneca Falls Convention that took place in July 1848. The convention was held by women to discuss their social, political, and religious rights; it was the first public gathering by both women and men "in an attempt to organize efforts to achieve social change. During the proceedings, several speeches and debates were conducted on the nature of woman and her rights... [particularly] around the issue of the vote..."[152] The event culminated with the "Declaration of Principles," which was closely modeled after the Declaration of Independence, and pronounced that "it is the sacred duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."[153]

The final ideal – the New Woman – emerged during the 1880s and 1890s

> ...as the daughters who had watched their mothers struggle for public access came into adulthood.... [These participants] were interested in gaining greater access to education, employment, and economic and civic rights, and in changing expectations concerning personal behavior. They believed that gender, no more than race, should determine human rights or a person's sphere of living. The New Woman is [also] closely associated with the new women's colleges that emerged in the late nineteenth century.[154]

The theater also contributed to the rise of the Woman's Movement in several ways, but most notably so through the works of four playwrights: Alexander Dumas *fils.*, Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, and Susan Glaspell.

---

[152] Ibid. 198.
[153] Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1959) 77. Qtd. in Cruea 198.
[154] Cruea 198-199.

In 1849 Alexander Dumas *fils.* wrote *Camille,* which is "often regarded as the first *pièce à thèse* ('thesis' or 'discussion' play). In it, he attempted to defend the dignity of the 'fallen woman' as he portrayed a love affair between a respectable young man (Armande) and a courtesan (Marguerite)."[155] Henrik Ibsen, often called "The Father of Modern Drama," wrote *A Doll's House* in 1879. Ibsen intended the main purpose of the play to advocate the sovereignty of the individual and not as a piece of feminist propaganda as original audiences mistakenly assumed.[156] That said, however, the play did serve as "a rallying point for early advocates of feminism who demanded suffrage and more legal rights."[157] George Bernard Shaw, whose very name is synonymous with 'soap box' drama, wrote *Pygmalion* in 1913.[158] Even though *Pygmalion* is a comedy,

> ...for Shaw, "comedy is essentially a serious business." Shaw had a "simple philosophy for getting laughs: "Tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world." Shaw's comedy is ironic because it forces audiences to reconsider long-held values and conventions, which he subverts to expose their hollowness. Where most playwrights attack a character for failing to live up to the ideals of society, Shaw attacks the ideals themselves... [and the] outmoded ideas that preserve poverty, war, slavery (of all kinds, including that of the marriage contract), and power.[159]

The final playwright is Susan Glaspell who, in 1931, became "the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in drama."[160] Then, in 1921, she wrote a full-length play entitled *The Inheritors* in which

> ...she challenged American jingoism in World War I while calling for greater individual freedom (especially for women) and tolerance of unpopular

---

[155] Greenwald, et al. 836.
[156] Ibid. 851, 853.
[157] Ibid. 853.
[158] Ibid. 1001.
[159] Ibid. 1002.
[160] Ibid. 1056.

> viewpoints.... Also, in 1921 she wrote her most experimental work, *The Verge,* an Expressionistic drama that portrayed the inner workings of the mind of the so-called new woman. In both her short and longer pieces, Glaspell presented strong central female characters who sought autonomy in a male-dominated society. *Trifles* (1916) remains the best-known, most produced of these plays.[161]

All in all, the timeline of the Woman's Rights Movement throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth seems to correlate with the return of the image and right-brain values within society. Of course, correlation does not always prove causation; it is entirely likely that there are other catalytic factors at work. Even so, it remains an interesting observation.

The return of the Goddess

Due to the deeply rooted heritage of the Judeo-Christian monotheistic tradition in Western understanding and religion, it simply was not possible for goddess worship to return in any significant manner, at least not in the form of its previous manifestations. However, I contend that goddess worship did return in an extremely subtle fashion with the rise of the transcendentalism movement. Historically, there is a rich literary tradition in which nature is consistently depicted or symbolized with feminine qualities; for example, consider the phrases "Mother Earth" or "Mother Nature." Generally speaking, transcendentalism encouraged the notion of looking to nature for inspiration and philosophical insights. During this time, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was a Harvard-trained minister, rejected orthodox religion in favor of nature and self-reflection.[162]

---

[161] Ibid.
[162] Keene, et al. 303.

CHAPTER IV

THE TECHNOLOGY EFFECT

"Show movies, survive, and flourish.
Ignore movies, decay, and perish."[163]

Up until this point, in the 600 or so years of history covered within the scope of this thesis thus far, only three technological innovations have emerged that significantly altered the flow of history: the Gutenberg printing press, photography, and electricity. The twentieth century brought with it an increasingly rapid succession of technological catalysts. The invention of film constitutes the fourth catalyst. It is closely followed by the advent of radio and, later, television.

At the close of the nineteenth century, there does seem to be a general consensus on the part of the church recognizing, albeit rather begrudgingly, the use of the theatre as a valid form of moral edification and religious education. However, the social stigma of its perceived inherent immorality still lingered within the societal consciousness because, for the better part of the last three centuries, the two institutions had been so deeply embroiled within a conflict that seethed with enmity. As much as the church recognized the power of the Image, the idea of abruptly turning around and embracing the theatrical medium was, in many ways, quite ludicrous. As a result, one can almost imagine that there was a palpable sense of relief by the church regarding the invention of film in 1895. Finally, here was a technology – wholly innocent and untainted by the

---

[163] As qtd. in Terry Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry.* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007) 96.

existence of a seedy past – that the church could embrace, thereby wielding the power of the Image in reaching and educating the masses. Indeed, that is exactly what the church would do for the next two decades before doubts and concerns began to seep into the mentality of the church. As John Lyden points out, many

> ...Christians did not initially perceive the cinema as a threat to Christian values (as it was often understood later), but rather as an opportunity to convey Christian stories and values to a wider audience in an immediate and effective way. Christian groups tried their hand at making films, although budgetary constraints and ambivalence about the medium prevented this from becoming entirely successful.[164]

One such individual who originally held religious aspirations for the use of film was Vachel Lindsay, a poet. Interestingly enough, there were actually two

> ...contrasting works by Lindsay on film [that] mark the waxing and waning of religious influence in the silent film era. His optimistic work, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (published in 1915), saw Edison as the new Gutenburg, ushering in a flowering period of creative energy and moral evangelism... Yet even Lindsay, with early religious fervor and sanguinity... could not cope with the decline of his own poetic and ethical influence in the wilder days of the 1920s. A second book of film criticism, *The Progress and Poetry of the Movies*, written for publication around 1925, looks more gloomily and desperately at the emerging mass-produced, consumerist entertainment culture.... [To him, the] photoplay in this decade between 1915 and 1925 lost its religious soul and discovered Mammon.[165]

Overall, the interaction between the Protestant church and film during the era of silent films was amicable, prolific, and successful. Terry Lindvall – a scholar who specializes in this era of "Sanctuary Cinema," as he calls it – wrote that the relations between silent

---

[164] John Lyden. "Introduction." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 2.
[165] Terry Lindvall. "Silent cinema and religion: an overview (1895-1930)." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 17-18.

American film and the Christian church "began tentatively, but with a remarkable openness to a visionary rapprochement."[166]

Silent Cinema (1895-1930)

In 1899, Herbert Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, argued "that his Bioscope cinematograph was the 'missing link' between the stage and the pulpit, adapting drama to religious use in a 'safe, possible, and sanctified way.'"[167] Virtually overnight, there was a wave of Cinematic Apologists – including a reverend named Herbert A. Jump, who Lindvall refers to as the St. John of Damascus for the motion pictures – who believed that any cultural media could be subjugated and made religious.[168] Jump was a man who was truly excited about the prospect of using film for religious education and, as Lindvall points out, on at least one occasion he based his appeal in the communication strategies recommended by the Apostle Paul:

> We men and women who have ever shown interest in pictures, hanging them on the walls of our homes, seeking them in illustrated books and now in picture-postcards, should turn naturally to the motion picture sermon which puts the gospel in a pictorial form. Some of you who attend church love the doctrinal phraseology of St. Paul. There is many a hardheaded American workingman, however, who confesses freely that to him St. Paul is only a prosy old theologian. Paul, however, was not a prosy theologian to the men of his day. Why not? Because his illustrations for the gospel were taken from the life of his contemporaries—the racing habits of his day, for example, and the boxing matches. We ministers of today may not quite dare follow Paul in illustrating spiritual truth from the trotting park or a recent famous prize fight in a western city, but we have a right to use stories taken from life in the shop and factory and on the street as illustrations of the gospel to the men of today. Because the motion picture carefully selected will tell to the eye moral truths with vigor of

---

[166] Lindvall, *Routledge* 13-14.
[167] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema* 56-7.
[168] Ibid. 59.

> illustration and an eloquence of impression that the most enthusiastic orator cannot command, it has a proper place in the equipment of any church trying to reach the masses.[169]

Indeed, there was a clear logic to this call for a sanctuary cinema. Why should the church fall behind the secular in using these new technologies to reach the masses? This innovative medium, and any other media with such tremendous potential, should rightly be embraced; in 1916, Reverend Chester S. Bucher made just that point when he asked, "Why should the churches disregard this great potential asset, especially since it was a clergyman, the Rev. Hannibal Goodwin, who was the inventor of the flexible film that made motion pictures possible?"[170]

The film that Bucher refers to here is a transparent, flexible film that is generally a long, thin strip of plastic, which is rolled up and stored inside a small cylinder. This film, which is very similar to what is used in film cameras today, uses celluloid as a basic material. The Rev. Goodwin discovered the method for making this film and filed his patent application in 1887. On August 27, 1889, George Eastman – the founder of Kodak – introduces "a transparent, flexible film, which uses celluloid, a basic material, to the public."[171] If you think this sounds familiar, Goodwin thought so too; the following September, he filed "an interference against Eastman for the use [and sale] of transparent, flexible film."[172]

---

[169] As qtd. in ibid. 62.
[170] As qtd. in Lindvall, *Routledge* 13.
[171] "History of Photography." *Pbs.org*. PBS Online, 1999. Web. 07 Apr. 2011.
[172] Ibid.

From 1895 to the mid-twenties or so, there is significant evidence of a happy working relationship between the church and film and the general consensus was that the

> ...Kingdom of God had nothing to fear from this instructional and inspirational tool. In fact, a former corporation lawyer and New York journalist (two occupations of which he repented), Colonel Henry H. Hadley... viewed a photoplay version of the passion play, [and] he obtained a print as an illustrative accessory for his camp meetings.... Hadley prophesied that these "pictures are going to be a great force. It is the age of pictures; these moving pictures are going to be the best teachers and the best preachers in the history of the world...." Thousands attended his spectacular revivals that combined movies with music (*Ave Maria, O Holy Night,* etc.) to draw in crowds to hear and see the Gospel message. It was the beginning of a movement that was to embrace the possibilities of enabling the eyes to see the wonders of God.[173]

Christian moviemakers, who were working hard to produce films for moral and religious education, formed a commanding portion of the Hollywood filmmakers. In fact, not only was it such an amazing tool for teaching, it was a "wholesome alternative to the saloon and the brothel."[174] They could educate the troubled masses *and* keep them out of sin. For some, the expensive 35mm film projector was considered a vital piece of church equipment and, arguably, as necessary as the pews one sat in.[175]

The Methodists were one of the most active denominations in the arena of sanctuary cinema. Their "vision centered on educational and evangelical films. In the political forefront of the Temperance, Sabbatarian, and uplift movements, Methodists embraced the Victorian moral cinema of their own southern Methodist "missionary" filmmaker,

---

[173] Ibid. 14-15.
[174] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 26.
[175] Ibid.

D.W. Griffith. His *A Drunkard's Reformation*... echoed the Methodists' opposition to alcohol and suggested that the art of drama could be used to reform sinners."[176]

In many ways, this vision is a clear continuation of the temperance melodramas of the mid-nineteenth century. *Ten Nights in a Barroom*, by Timothy Shay Arthur, was a

> ...popular temperance melodrama during the 1850s. Other plays centering on temperance reform during that decade included *The Bottle, Aunt Dinah's Pledge, The Drunkard's Warning,* and *The Fruits of the Wine Cup.* These reform melodramas traced a character's journey from respectability to the degradation of drink (and sometimes back to respectability), giving audiences a vicarious glimpse of alcohol-induced wickedness."[177]

These temperance melodramas had a clear moral message and even managed to convert *some* anti-theatrical Protestants to playgoing."[178] In his films, Griffith would often use images of sin and salvation to "provide an experience that could convert the soul from evil to good. In fact, Griffith saw himself as a secular preacher, spreading the Word far beyond that Methodist Church in La Grange."[179]

Griffith was also a speaker at the 1919 Methodist Episcopal Centenary in Columbus, Ohio, which was the event that "marked the zenith of a church-film alliance."[180] During Griffith's speech, he "addressed thousands of Methodists... and motivated them to adopt moving picture projectors and use them for teaching, preaching, and worldwide mission

---

[176] Ibid. 8-9.
[177] "Ten Nights in a Bar Room." *The Lost Museum*. American Social History Productions, Inc., n.d. Web. 07 Apr. 2011.
[178] Zarilli et al. 227.
[179] As qtd. in Lindvall, *Routledge*, 15-16.
[180] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 111.

work."[181] In preparation for the Centenary, the church constructed an eight-story tall "open-air moving picture screen that was 136 feet high and 146 feet wide, with a seating capacity for over four million."[182] Using this screen, "hundreds of films were shown to tens of thousands of pastors and religious leaders...."[183] Among the films featured were *The Wayfarer, The City Beautiful, The Children's Crusade, The Parade of the Nations, The Spirit of John Wesley, Daddy Long Legs, Nearer My God to Thee, Hit-the-Trail Holiday, The Sign of the Cross,* and *From the Manger to the Cross*.[184] Lindvall writes that Griffith and roughly a dozen other

> ...Methodist laymen devised "ways and means to raise a fund of $120,000,000 for the purchase of entertainment devices to be placed in the churches of this denomination." The churches numbered over sixty-four million in the United States. The grand vision was to enable a mature Methodist Church to become "one of the most important film producing and distributing concerns in the world." It would then have more churches in America "where screens will be maintained, than there are motion picture theatres at the present time."[185]

Many of the religious leaders present at the Centenary returned to their churches to institute movies within their repertoire of evangelical methods.[186] Methodists and other Protestant denominations were excited about this new medium and across "the nation churches expanded their ministries by exhibiting films and seeking new audiences through the fresh material of moving pictures.[187]

---

[181] Ibid. 16.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Lindvall, *Routledge*, 26.
[184] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 113.
[185] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema*, 112-113.
[186] Lindvall, *Routledge*, 26.
[187] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema*, 116.

A roaring, bumpy road

The Roaring Twenties brought with it a seemingly endless series of body blows to the sacred cinema movement. Despite the relative enthusiasm of the church during the silent film era, films

> ...had faced censorship issues from 1907, when the City of Chicago passed the first moving picture ordinance.... Other big cities introduced censorship laws of their own; by 1915 individual cities had united to join the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. That same year of 1915 brought the first Supreme Court decision on movie censorship, when the Mutual Film Corporation of Ohio objected to paying the State of Ohio a fee to have their movies licensed and took their case to the Supreme Court. To their dismay the Court unanimously rejected their case: Justice Joseph McKenna wrote that the guarantees of free opinion and speech could not be obtained for the theater, the circus, or the movies because "they may be used for evil."[188]

By 1921, there was an ever-increasing occurrence of sex and drug scandals among actors and producers that began to taint the image and reputation of Hollywood within the public eye.[189] These scandals resulted in both public outcries for censorship as well as creating a "public relations crisis for the film industry. The studios, seriously worried by the threat that the government might step in to regulate movies, formed the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1922."[190]

As the 1920s progressed, church leaders began to join "together to resist what they saw as a deluge of modernity and immorality gushing out of the film industry."[191] The fact

---

[188] Andrew Quicke. "The era of censorship (1930-1967)." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 33.
[189] Ibid. 27, 33.
[190] Ibid. 33.
[191] Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 179.

that Lindvall chooses the phrase "modernity *and* immorality" is not accidental; Lindvall goes on to explain how the

> ...church's ambivalent relation to the moving picture reflected the uncertain and schizophrenic connection the church had to modernity itself. With the enlightened emergence of science, technology, urbanization, and industrialization, the spirit of modernity reigned over the realms of the motion picture industry....
>
> Modernity, in theological terms, entailed what conservatives viewed as a slipping trend toward secularity, higher criticism with its overemphasis on human rationality, and doctrinal and moral license.... The acceptance and subsequent rejection of films by various Christian groups parallel their ambivalent, even cyclical, relationships to iconography and theater....
>
> For churches the root problem with modernity was the problem of secularity, in its multiple manifestations. Secularity connoted the twin vices of sexual immorality and excessive violence. These were the warts of the Hollywood body of films in the late 1920s. [However, film] itself remained a neutral medium... and Christians could accept the technology without the secular content....
>
> Paradoxically, the theatrical image possessed the potential of aiding the work of the church, but carried equal potential as a rival.[192]

By 1926, the box receipts for movies came in at $600 million compared to "$500 million in tithing to Protestant churches, giving the entertainment industry the edge and showing that the average American was paying more for amusement than for his organized religious life."[193]

The radio effect

In many ways, the invention of the radio made the relationship of the church to film more complicated because it provided a more simple and inexpensive medium that played to the left-brain preference of *hearing* the Word. By 1923, radio had gained a significant foothold in the entertainment culture and provided an alternative medium to

---

[192] Ibid. 204, 205.
[193] Ibid. 135.

film. On November 2, 1920, station KDKA went on the air from an "improvised studio on the roof of the Westinghouse factory in East Pittsburgh" and became the "first" broadcast station.[194] The foundation for radio broadcasting in America

> ...was laid between 1919 and 1927, a period of time that brought about (1) the concept of broadcasting to entertain a general audience, (2) the acceptance of advertising as the means of radio's financial support, (3) the development of competing national networks of stations, and (4) the federal regulation and licensing of stations.[195]

As enthusiastically as the church embraced the inherently iconic medium of film, there remained a pervasive preference to either *hear* or *read* the Word. Eventually, the existence of an underlying attitude, tinged with a definite air of superiority, was revealed, in large part due to the radio. One Congregational pastor, Caleb Justice, affirmed the superiority of the Word of God to images: "No matter how illustrative of religious truth a motion picture may be, it seldom can take the place of the oral sermon."[196] The oral sermon was still prized over the image and that is exactly where radio came into play; it provided a novel medium that was ideally suited for preaching and so the church felt comfortable abandoning nontheatrical film ministry, even with sound, as "outmoded and futile."[197] Lindvall's use of the word "outmoded" to describe the attitude of the church toward film is extremely telling. It implies that, on some level, there was a sense that even the barely-born talkies would not be around for long because

---

194 Sydney W. Head and Christopher H. Sterling, *Broadcasting in America: A Survey of Electronic Media,* Fifth Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987) 53.
195 Ibid. 66.
196 Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 200.
197 Ibid. 14.

they were somehow already old-fashioned. The idea was that, with radio around, people would simply lose interest in the visual again.

One way to view this period within its context is to use the Stages of Change Model (SCM), which was established by two sociologists in the 1970s. This theory is often used to describe the process by which behavioral change occurs within an individual. They divided the process up into five stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.[198] The action and maintenance stages involve successfully bringing about behavior change, but it is held that periods of relapse are normal and to be expected. This period is just such a relapse; it occurred on a societal level and was in part instigated by the advent of radio. If modernity and immorality were the nails in the coffin, the radio was undoubtedly the shovel that dug the hole. By the time the stock market crashed in 1929 and marked the onset of the Great Depression, it was but a symbolic death knell after the nails had already been hammered into the coffin of the sacred cinema era. The age of silent film was over.

The Era of Censorship

In 1927, Hollywood introduced the "talkies," which not only increased the actual production costs, but also necessitated the purchase of new 16mm sound and film projection technology. Clearly, as a nonprofit organization, the church often relies solely upon the tithes and donations of its congregations and so with these

---

[198] Laura Bounds, et al., *Health & Fitness: A Guide to a Healthy Lifestyle,* Fourth Edition (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2009) 6, 8.

> ...innovations in sound moving pictures, mounting production and exhibition costs, limited film products appropriate for religious settings, and the prospect of a novel medium, radio, ideally suited for preaching, the Church generally abandoned nontheatrical film ministry as outmoded and futile. It would alter its posture vis-à-vis film from creative force to critical judge and lose its place as a viable influence for decades to come.[199]

In a very real sense, the church gave up on the medium, relinquished any influence it may have had within the industry, and left the void to be filled by secular films (which it quickly was).[200] Lindvall may have summarized this best when he wrote:

> In time, fears that film would corrupt the church by introducing non-Christian values helped to erode efforts to exploit the medium for evangelical purposes. Suspicion arose that trafficking in images would open the door for a reversal of authority and influence.... Ultimately the advent of radio attenuated organized religion's involvement in film, leading to an alternative relation with the mass media that eclipsed an early vital one with the moving picture.[201]

The focus of the church had begun to shift "from making movies to critiquing and policing them" as it transitioned into the Era of Censorship.[202] In 1922, after the formation of the MPPDA, the

> ...motion picture producers hired Presbyterian elder Will H. Hays to be their Hollywood czar [and] to oversee the moral and religious content of the film industry. Church leaders, particularly Roman Catholics and many disgruntled Protestants, questioned and rejected the professional leadership of Hays....
>
> By 1929, numerous Protestant denominations, aroused to a high pitch of enthusiasm by what they saw as a battle against filth and depravity, made common cause with the Catholics. Other religious and social organizations, including noted Jewish leaders, endorsed the campaign [against Hays]... the alleged moderator of movie morals, [who] had not been able to clean up the business himself, [and] so Catholics and Protestants in the Federal Council of Churches united to take control.[203]

---

199 Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 14.
200 Lindvall, *Routledge,* 29
201 Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema,* 6.
202 Lindvall, *Routledge,* 28.
203 Ibid. 27-28.

Hays, worried about these ever growing public outcries and church demands for tougher censorship (particularly over the use of language), began to look "for a stricter set of rules. Extraordinarily, these regulations that would control a multimillion-dollar industry for thirty years were written by three little-known Catholics."[204] This new code – also referred to as the Hollywood Production Code – was written in 1930; however, it was not yet enforced.[205] Quicke notes that in spring 1933 a

> ...sensational book entitled *Our Movie-made Children* had suggested that 72 percent of all movies were unfit for children.... Churches of every denomination were worried about Hollywood's immoral films.... Monsignor Amulet Cigognani, the Pope's new apostolic delegate to the United States, [demanded] Catholic action against the movies. This call led to the Catholic bishops appointing an Episcopal Committee on Motion Pictures... [which] proposed the formation of an entirely new Catholic pressure group which would claim to represent all Christians, Protestants included; its name was to be "The Legion of Decency."[206]

Much of the driving force behind the movement for film censorship was spearheaded by this Roman Catholic pressure group whose focus became the "formation and policing of the Production Code Administration (PCA)."[207] In December 1933, while "under pressure from the Legion, Will Hays named the fervently Catholic Joseph Breen as director of the Production Code Administration."[208] By 1934, a "mechanism was set up to enforce the code. For the next thirty years, virtually every film produced or exhibited in the United States had to receive a seal of approval from the office of Joseph Breen."[209]

---

[204] Quicke 33-34.
[205] Christopher Jacobs. "The Production Code of 1930." *und.edu*. (University of North Dakota, n.d.). Web. 7 Apr. 2011.
[206] Quicke 35.
[207] Lindvall, *Routledge,* 32.
[208] Quicke 35.
[209] Jacobs

The result was that "[by] mid-1937 the Catholic lobby totally dominated Hollywood film content.... At no point were Protestant church people involved in the decisions of the Legion of Decency, nor were Protestants involved in PCA decisions."[210]

Despite this lack of real representation, there is evidence that many Protestant churches initially supported the Legion: for example, the Federal Council of Churches "sponsored a conference on 13 July 1934 to consider Protestant cooperation with the Legion of Decency, and voted unanimously to urge the Protestant Church to cooperate with the Legion."[211] However, as the Catholics took control of the censorship process, "Protestants felt marginalized, and often disagreed with the censorship decisions that reflected a more Catholic than Protestant understanding."[212] Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Protestants "were well aware and often vexed by the reality that far more images of Catholic priests than Protestant clergy appeared in films."[213] By the end of World War II, the "tacit assumption in Hollywood that the Legion of Decency spoke not just for Catholics but for all Christians finally evaporated."[214] The result was a slow fading of the Protestant Church's support of the Legion.

---

[210] Quicke 36.
[211] Quicke 37.
[212] Lyden 3.
[213] Bryan Stone, "Modern Protestant Approaches to Film (1960 to the Present)." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) 73.
[214] Quicke 42.

In 1948, the Legion of Decency was dealt a shattering, near-fatal body blow by the Supreme Court with the "Paramount Decision," which declared the movie industry to be a monopoly because most, if not all, movie theaters were studio-owned. The decision severely undercut the basis of the Legion's power virtually overnight because Paramount Studios was forced to sell off all of their theaters, making them independently owned, and the Legion was left without a means of enforcing censorship. Their loss of power was further extended in 1952 when the Supreme Court ruled to extend the first amendment protection to moving pictures.[215]

In 1953, the film *Martin Luther* was released; Protestant publications like

> ...the *Christian Herald* and the *Methodist Recorder* were delighted with the film, and urged their readers to see it.... But the Catholic Church and the Legion of Decency seemed not to have forgiven Martin Luther for starting the Reformation 400 years earlier. Catholic publications attacked the film as bad theology and faulty history.[216]

This decision of the Legion to attack the film devastated their relationship with the Protestant churches that "were by now less than enthusiastic toward the Legion of Decency, and their opinions turned to outright hostility."[217]

Evolution of the Protestant pro-Hollywood stance

By fall 1940, Protestant writers were beginning to question the Catholic approach of attacking everything "Hollywood." Howard Rushmore wrote, in the *Christian Herald*,

---

[215] Quicke 42-43.
[216] Quicke 46.
[217] Ibid.

that there "comes a time when even a movie critic feels that Hollywood has too long taken the blame for all forms of national calamities."[218] At this point, the *Christian Herald* began "both to befriend Hollywood and to advance the making of movies for churches."[219] Andrew Quicke analyzes the interesting history behind the making of the film *One Foot in Heaven* (1941) and reveals how it indicated a shift in the Protestant mindset:

> The *Christian Herald* editor-in-chief Dr. Daniel Poling published a string of articles that praised Hollywood for its contribution to the war effort, singling out Warner Brothers' movie *Pastor Hall* (1940) as a truly magnificent film telling the story of a middle-aged pastor in Germany who challenged the Nazi philosophy. Jack Warner, Head of Production at Warner Brothers, was quick to respond to favorable reviews from the Protestant press. He wrote a fulsome letter to Poling asking for advice and help with his next film, which was to be about a Protestant pastor in the USA. [...]
>
> Significantly, this letter shows that the Protestant approach of praising rather than condemning Hollywood studios was beginning to bring a type of cooperation between Jewish-led studios and the Protestant churches undreamed of by the antisemitic Legion of Decency, who only condemned, never praised, movies. Poling's reply to Jack Warner's flattering approach was a masterpiece of bridge building between those of his readers who loved Hollywood and those who disliked it. He wrote, "We could ignore [Jack Warner's approach] as though movies did not exist. We could refuse the invitation and assume a negative attitude entirely, or we can accept the invitation and make an earnest effort to render 16 million young Protestants and millions of others a constructive service." Poling formed an advisory board for Warner Brothers... [and all] went well; when the film *One Foot in Heaven* (1941) was released Poling was delighted.... He was deeply disappointed when a Catholic bishop chose to warn his congregation to stay away from the film because the film's subject was a Protestant minister.[220]

In the postwar years, the pro-Hollywood stance of Protestants continued to grow in popularity because, following the end of World War II, there was an interesting turn of

---

[218] Howard Rushmore, "Motion Picture Commentator," *Christian Herald*, September 1940, 44.
[219] Quicke 37.
[220] Quicke 39.

events that precipitated the return of the church to the moviemaking industry. During the war, the various branches of armed services relied heavily on the use of 16mm projection technology in training their troops. However, when the war ended, the government was left with a surplus of 16mm equipment that no longer served a purpose, so they were sold off cheaply to anyone who cared to buy them, including churches.

After the acquisition of the equipment, there was now a sense of anxiety that a central body should take it upon itself to produce quality interdenominational films for Protestant parishes. As a result, the Protestant Film Commission – also known as the Production Film Office and later the Broadcasting and Film Commission (BFC) – was formed to plan "the production of non-theatrical films that will attempt [to]... dramatize the teachings of Christianity... [and] stimulate the masses of American people toward Christian attitudes and action."[221] After the National Council of Churches (NCC) was founded in 1950, the BFC was placed under their control. Through the BFC and

> ...its successor bodies, the NCC has, over the decades, tried to take a more constructive relationship to media and culture as well as a noncensorship approach in its attempt to influence films. [...]
>
> [In] 1963 it began to give awards to filmmakers in order to educate the Church around film appreciation and discrimination, with the hope also of influencing the industry by encouraging high-quality films. [...]
>
> The award given by the BFC to the controversial *The Pawnbroker* in 1965 was particularly significant and demonstrated that a new day had dawned, at least among mainline Protestants, who were increasingly interested in films that laid bare the truth about the human condition and offered serious and realistic, even if intense and gritty, portrayals of the world, rather than merely sentimental films simply because they did not offend. But while the awards may have helped produce greater audience turnout for some individual films the BFC deemed

[221] Heard 1946: 103, as qtd. in Quicke 40.

> superior, ultimately they were abandoned in 1973, as the industry was apparently unmotivated by the awards in rethinking its products.[222]

The MPA ratings system

By 1968, the method of film discernment and control moved from outright censorship to the adoption of a film rating "advance cautionary warning" system that was developed by the Motion Picture Association (MPA) and designed to give parents the final say so in what their children were allowed to watch.[223] This movement from "censorship boards to a self-regulated ratings system neither materialized overnight nor did Christians accept this shift unambiguously or without a struggle."[224] In an October 1974, *Christian Century* editor James Wall

> ...summarized the Protestant position – or at least the position of many mainline Protestants – as follows: "The motion picture is an art form – admittedly commercial – and it cannot be regulated by the government as a product. It can survive and grow only in an atmosphere of freedom."[225]

Television

The invention of the television was not an overnight event; it took place over many years and there were many inventors who had a hand its eventual creation. In the context of this paper, it would superfluous to go into this process given that it is unnecessary to the overall argument. The only significant detail that is of concern to this paper is that commercial television "began in earnest with the inception of network service in 1948,

---

[222] Stone 73-74.
[223] Quicke 40-41.
[224] Stone 74.
[225] Stone 74, 75.

though coast-to-coast interconnection did not come until 1951."[226] By the mid-1950s, television broadcasting had permeated through American society and firmly planted itself as a mass media form of communication. It contributed to an even further shift on the spectrum toward the right (Image). Although Hollywood initially viewed television as a rival, no pun intended, the relationship quickly moved from a competitive nature to one that was mutually beneficial. Hollywood gained a new marketing ground for future movie advertising campaigns while television secured the right to broadcast older movies on its networks in addition to its regular programming. The diffusion and impact of the television on American society will be further discussed in the conclusion.

The effect of cable television

By the 1980s, the rise of cable television and VCRs resulted in a blurring of the line, or the distinction, between the cinema and home.[227] The result was that, from this point on, even the most iconoclastic strands of Protestantism no longer called for complete abstinence from movie attendance, but rather advocated reliance on a system of discernment. In addition, the arrival of cable television

> ...posed new challenges and provoked new responses from Protestants. Conservative Protestants had long spoken out against the evils of television and the cinema, with some denominations... [such as the Christian Reformed Church and the Church of the Nazarene] instructing their members to avoid attendance of the cinema altogether. [...]
>
> With easier and greater availability of home movie-viewing... those denominations that had once insisted on wholesale abstinence from the cinema were now forced to rethink or more fully texture their prohibitions. The dissonance, if not hypocrisy, of refusing to watch films at the cinema while

[226] Head and Sterling 102.
[227] Stone 75.

> watching them six months later on HBO or network television (while simultaneously building a person video library!) finally became untenable.[228]

In the end, the advent of cable resulted in a change of attitude (from abstinence to discernment) on the part of some conservative, quasi-iconoclastic Protestant denominations during the 1970s and 1980s.

Modern Protestant approaches to film

By the 1940s, the Protestant church had clearly come to recognize that film would always have a role in entertainment in addition to its potential for teaching, which resulted in Protestants adopting a new "approach of praising rather than condemning Hollywood studios," a trend which grew more apparent as [World War II] continued.[229] However, due to the loss of formal censorial control over Hollywood, Protestants instead

> ...turned to three other avenues of influence where they could still make a difference: (1) the production of their own films and the creation of their own production companies, (2) providing guidance around movie-viewing for fellow Christians, whether in the form of movie reviews, or a growing number of books, articles, journals, and websites... and (3) activism in the form of organized protests, boycotts, or other means of economic and cultural pressure, especially in the case of controversial individual films.[230]

Guidance

As Lyden points out, many Protestants "favor media literacy approaches which encourage people to view questionable movies critically rather than refrain from viewing

---

[228] Stone 76.
[229] Quicke 39.
[230] Stone 78. The following three sections are largely summarized excerpts from Stone's supporting data for this argument, which can be found on pages 78 to 86.

them at all."[231] The use of this method in the latter half of the twentieth century resulted in a trend in which "Protestants would increasingly take it upon themselves to reflect on and engage film theologically... through books, journals, movie reviews, newsletters, websites, and other educational resources."[232] Typically, the Protestant approach to film is

> ...dialectical, dialogical, or dualistic rather than synthetic or sacramental (which is more typically Catholic)... [and] the points of contact between Christianity and film often turn out to revolve around biblical parallels and overlapping or similar moral vision or theological message. [...]
>
> However, there are still major differences among Protestants in how they have understood the aim of their interactions with film. [...]
>
> Historically, Protestants have been of one mind neither when it comes to assessing films nor when it comes to determining what the Church's response should be to those films.... The differences here turn largely on how one understands the role of the Church in society – whether, for example, the Church's task is to be that of a moral watchdog against infidels and blasphemers or whether, by contrast, the Church is to encourage free expression and liberty of conscience and speech, even if this offends and insults the cherished beliefs and ethical principles of Christians.[233]

Activism

Every so often, a controversial film will be released that generates a polarizing love-it-or-hate-it effect on Protestant denominations. Stone presents an analysis of one such film, *Dogma,* which was written and directed by Kevin Smith, a Roman Catholic, that

> ...received both protest and support from Protestants when it was released in 1999.... *Dogma* is the story of an abortion clinic worker who is also a disaffected Catholic and "the last scion" descended from the bloodline of Jesus. She is called upon by the "voice of God"... to stop two banished angels from returning to heaven... thereby [negating] all existence. [...]

---

[231] Lyden 3.
[232] Stone 85.
[233] Stone 85-86.

> Not surprisingly, many Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, found the movie... offensive, defamatory, and blasphemous. The film goes after a multitude of cherished Christian beliefs while exposing both religious institutions and corporations to ridicule. The film was denounced by several Catholic and Protestant groups, bringing pressure on family-family Disney Corporation, whose Miramax Films subsidiary produced the film. The American Family Association, for example, said the film "proves that Disney does not take the cherished beliefs of Christians seriously, and that Hollywood enjoys nothing more than mocking Christianity." [...]
>
> When Disney began to balk at releasing the film, Harvey and Bob Weinstein, the heads of Miramax, worked out a deal to pay Disney $12 million for its share of the film, and then found other avenues of distribution, thereby eliminating Disney's role. Conservative Protestants declared victory in their ability to use their collective social and economic power in altering a major media business deal.
>
> Yet *Dogma* was ultimately released and it did relatively well at the box office.... Indeed, not all Protestants were upset at the film, with a number of Protestant film reviewers engaging Smith's questions and satire with seriousness. [...] Thus, while the usual cast of Catholic and Protestant evangelical protestors attacked the film for its blasphemy and ridicule of organized religion, a large number of Protestants for whom faith is important but institutions suspect embraced the film and discussed it widely in small groups, classrooms, over coffee, on web blogs, and even in churches.[234]

Production

The final means by which Protestants generally interact with the medium of film is production. By the 1960s, the "earlier Protestant iconoclasm [had] increasingly given way to a variety of creative interactions with film and a more willing embrace of the medium."[235] As a result, there was a growth in movies made for Protestant churches by evangelical filmmakers.[236] Stone writes that

---

[234] Stone 80-81.
[235] Stone 72.
[236] Quicke 40-41.

> ...any review of filmmaking by Protestants in the last half of the twentieth century must begin with Billy Graham, a Southern Baptist evangelist who has preached to more people around the world than any other person in history. [...]
>
> In 1951, Graham's evangelistic association created Worldwide Pictures as a vehicle for producing and distributing Christian films.

This film company is responsible for distributing its "big-budget films made in its own Hollywood studio, not only to churches but to movie theaters and later to television.... Their most successful production was *The Hiding Place* (1975) about the Dutch Ten Boon sisters who were sent to a Nazi concentration camp."[237]

During the 1950s and 1960s, "films made by the different Protestant denominations for their own churches flourished."[238] In addition, "secular" movie studios such as MGM produced and released many Christian films during this period. Among these were such films as: *The Singing Nun* (1966), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *King of Kings* (1961), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1966). The year 1973 was a pretty big year, in and of itself, with the release of not one, but two Christian musical movies: *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar;* however, it is important to note that both of these films had been preceded by successful stage productions.

The arrival of the videocassette standard in the 1980s generated another virtual standstill on the part of the church and the enthusiasm for Christian filmmaking began to wane yet again, although not as sharply as it did in the '30s. However, it seems as though by the late 1990s, the Christian filmmaking industry was beginning to pick up steam again.

---

[237] Quicke 42.
[238] Ibid.

The Prince of Egypt was released in 1998 followed by *Joseph: King of Dreams* in 2000. There was the Left Behind trilogy: *Left Behind* (2000), *Left Behind: Tribulation Force* (2002), and *Left Behind: World at War* (2005).

There was also the release of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), which made some large, controversial waves within some social circles with its often gory depiction of Christ and the crucifixion. Stone points out that Protestants

> ...have at times organized themselves as an instrument of economic and cultural power in relationship to film [and] that organizing has not always been negative in the form of boycotts and protests [as with *Dogma*], but also positive in the form of garnering support for a film and ensuring its success. Indeed, one could argue that, in the case of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), even though Gibson, who produced, directed, and heavily financed the film, is a Roman Catholic, it was Protestants who gave the film its initial success... Hundreds of Protestant churches bought blocks of tickets and promoted the film both within their congregation and in a variety of media outlets throughout their communities, especially emphasizing the film as a tool of evangelistic outreach.[239]

In the end, it is clear that over the last 115 years or so, the inventions of film, radio, television, and cable have not only permanently established themselves within American society, but also actively reshaped various Protestant beliefs by adding a right-brain dimension to a historically left-brain faith.

---

[239] Stone 81.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this analysis of the history of Christian drama clearly depicts the catalytic, even revolutionary, power inherent in new forms of mass communication media. Furthermore, it illustrates how this transformative power of communication media – once it reaches critical mass – necessarily prompts a societal shift along the Word/Image (or left-brain/right-brain) spectrum. In turn, this shift then provokes a hegemonic fluctuation, which often results in a cultural revolution as individuals begin to scrutinize their society, question their worldviews, and even challenge their systems of authority.

In addition, I would argue that the results of this media-generated process of cultural hegemony also exist on a spectrum. Despite the high number of technological innovations addressed here, the visibility of these resulting shifts takes on varying degrees and some shifts are more noticeable than others. The question then becomes: What affects the change in visibility?

Time.

The degree of visibility

Historically, society as a whole has favored mass communication using only two senses: seeing and hearing. The reasons for this are more or less clear; for the most part, it is simply not feasible for mass communication to occur through the senses of smelling,

touching, and tasting, all of which require a certain physical immediacy in order to be used. It is my conclusion that the visibility of these shifts occurred as a result of society having ample time to elevate, to the extreme, one form of communication over the other. Clearly, an illiterate society will elevate an oral culture over that of a literate culture because there cannot be a choice until the acquisition of literacy.

The arrival of the Word

This acquisition of literacy is, again, the role of the Gutenberg printing press in generating the resulting shift and the Protestant Reformation. This shift, more than any other, was by far the most visible and the most extreme within western society; it was a complete 180°. Certainly, literacy had existed for several thousand years by this time, but it had remained concentrated within the hands of the rich, powerful, and elite; likewise, the majority of western society maintained an oral culture for several thousands of years. In a sense, the Gutenberg printing press is what allowed a true form of cultural hegemony to occur; it placed the power of literacy into the hands of the people.

Another factor that heightened the visibility of this shift is that illiterate individuals had become accustomed to their rulers being literate. Naturally, people began to associate literacy with power. After the Gutenberg printing press, people realized that they too could acquire literacy and believed that doing so would grant them power. As a result, they began to exert that power through the Protestant Reformation.

The return of the Image

The eventual return of the image in American society was also fairly visible due largely in part to America's rather unique founding. From the very first Puritan settlers to its inception as a nation, the foundation of American culture emphasized left-brain values – often at the expense of right-brain values. Furthermore, the New World was greatly isolated from the rest of the world in effect insulating settlers from external influences and strengthening the overwhelmingly word-based belief system of pre-American society.

Despite their differences, the illiterate English society and the literate American society shared one thing in common; they are both "half-brain" societies. The former was a right-brain culture and the latter a left-brain culture. A major difference, however, was the attitude of each society towards the "other half," which greatly affected the visibility of each societal shift. Those who were illiterate often coveted the left-brain; they wanted to read. On the other hand, the iconoclastic culture that reigned supreme in the New World resulted in a deep suspicion of anything remotely image-based. This suspicion bred the fog of animosity that shrouded the return of the right-brain primarily because it was forced to do so in stages.

The first stage was actually, in many ways, the growing "pervasive" presence of the theatre in the New World and America. The second stage was the invention of photography, which gave the Image the ability to be as widely and inexpensively

distributed as the Word. This particular stage coincides with the beginning of the Women's Rights Movement as well as a begrudging recognition on the part of the church regarding the potential of the Image and theatre to edify. However, the church for the most part did not yet take action to include it within their evangelical methods. The third stage was the invention of film, which many denominations – including the United Methodist Church – eagerly embraced for quite some time; however, after only three decades, the church began to balk in the face of mounting production costs and the rise of scandals in Hollywood. At this point, aided by the establishment of the first radio broadcasting station in 1920,[240] the church took a backseat in the film industry and opted to attempt regulating the industry instead (a very left-brain thing to do). This is when the breakdown in communication begins to take root albeit underground. The church lapses into left-brain activities even as the majority of American society continues its trend of increasingly favoring right-brain values over that of its counterpart. By this time, image-based mediums were widely accepted throughout American society; the arrival of commercial television broadcasting in 1948 further cemented the role of the Image within the culture. By 1955, roughly 64.5% of American homes had a television set.[241] This correlates with the cultural and political upheaval of the sixties and seventies, which brings us right back to 1967.

---

[240] Scientific American, *Inventions and Discoveries: All the Milestones in Ingenuity – from the Discovery of Fire to the Invention of the Microwave Oven*. Rodney Carlisle. John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2004.

[241] "Number of TV Households in America." *TVHistory.tv*. TVHistory.tv, n.d. Web. 07 Apr. 2011.

What we've got here is a failure to communicate

In 1967, the Methodist Church and the Evangelist United Brethren merged to form the United Methodist Church; and since 1967, the United Methodist Church has not experienced a single year of growth. Perhaps some might suggest that it was because they merged, but if you look into the membership data prior to the merge, it does not seem to support that theory. Generally, the Methodist Church was steadily growing in its membership until 1965 while the Evangelist United Brethren maintained a slight growth rate until it peaked in 1962.[242] Even before the merge, both denominations were beginning to incur a loss of members. Another article points to a study, which indicated that members of mainline denominations were "younger than the population in the 1960s, the study says, but since the 1970s, churches have been serving a membership older than the general population."[243] So, what changed?

The birth of the generation gap

According to Wikipedia, the generation gap

> ...is and was a term popularized in Western countries during the 1960s referring to differences between people of a younger generation and their elders, especially between a child and their parent's generation.
>
> Although some generational differences have existed throughout history, because of more rapid cultural change during the modern era differences between the two generations increased in comparison to previous times, particularly with respect to such matters as musical tastes, fashion, culture and politics.[244]

---

[242] "Evangelical United Brethren"/"Methodist Church." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005. Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[243] Linda Green. "United Methodist death rates higher than U.S. average." *umc.org*. United Methodist Church, 2009. Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[244] "Generation Gap." *wikipedia.org.* Wikipedia, 21 Feb 2011. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Now the question is, what created the more rapid cultural change that exacerbated generational differences? Once again, the answer is technology. The difference this time, in addition to the increasing rate of technology, is that the rate of diffusion by this point is beginning to quicken. With each passing day, it takes less and less time for a new innovation to permeate throughout a society. Earlier, I mentioned that nearly sixty-five percent of households owned a television by 1955.

The first generation gap is widely recognized as the Baby Boomers versus the older generation. Scholars generally identify Baby Boomers as those born between the years of 1946 and 1964. For obvious reasons, those most susceptible to influence by new forms of communication media are children because they have not yet been "hardwired." In 1955, the oldest of the Baby Boomers were only about nine years old and, statistically, 65% of Baby Boomers lived in a household that had a television. This was the first time that a significant proportion of a specific generation grew up with an image-based medium inside their home; while the television had already been invented by the Silent Generation (1925-1945), only about 9% of households had a television in 1950.[245]

By 1963, the first of these Baby Boomers reached adulthood, which correlates with the time frame that membership began to decline in mainline denominations.

---

[245] "Number of TV Households in America."

Implications

Modern electronic/mediated culture

Several scholars describe today's culture as an "electronic" or "mediated" culture. One scholar, Tex Sample, argues that people are "being 'wired' differently in the enormous changes brought by new developments in electronic technology."[246] Through his research, Sample highlights "three basic characteristics of the practices of electronic culture in our time and in our society: engaging the world through images, sound as beat, and visualization."[247]

Sample addresses the implications of the first characteristic – engaging the world through images – by referencing the work of Larry Smarr at the University of Illinois. Sample summarizes Smarr's work and writes that it

> …focuses on the difference in the capacity of the brain's mental 'text computer' and the eye-brain system's capacity to take in images. Our 'text-computer' is our brain's capacity to read print on a page. Smarr discovers that this text computer can take in print at a rate of one hundred bits per second, but the eye-brain system can take in a billion bits per second.[248]

Furthermore, Sample points out that it is possible that activities such as video games are "introducing our children to a different way of thinking that involves the integration of multiple variables and overlapping lines of simultaneous actions."[249] Sample is quick to caution others that while it would be a mistake to argue that images are replacing print, it

---

[246] Tex Sample. *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God.* (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1998) 16.
[247] Ibid. 20.
[248] Ibid. 30.
[249] Ibid.

is clear that electronic culture – with the coming of the computer, the Internet, hypertext, hypermedia, and virtual reality – affects the way print is carried out. Sample even suggests that this explosion of technology is forming a new "electronic literality" around us.[250]

It also appears as though this "explosion of technology" is, in many ways, responsible for generating this new, mediated culture in the first place. As the rate of innovations and their subsequent diffusion and adoption within a society continues to increase, the result is actually the stabilization and mediation between our two primary senses. We are truly becoming a multisensory society (in terms of its communication). I would, however, like to make a note that I have not come across mention of within my research materials. It is my opinion that there seems to be a trend emerging within our society that is resulting in the inclusion of a third sense in communication media, that of touch. Over the last decade or so, there has been an explosion of companies exploring the realm of haptic technology. One company, SensAble Technologies, provides "software and devices that add the sense of touch to the digital world."[251] Another company, Immersion, is exploring the potential applications of haptic technology in medicine, automotive industries, consumer electronics, and gaming. Immersion defines haptics (or touch feedback) as

> ...the future of the user experience in digital devices. Why? Touch is at the core of personal experience and the only sense capable of simultaneous input and

---

[250] Ibid. 24.

[251] "Products and Services Overview." *Sensable.com*. Sensable Technologies, 2011. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

> output. Touch feedback improves task performance, increases user satisfaction, and supplies a greater sense of realism and enjoyment.[252]

While haptic technology is clearly at its infancy, one has to wonder what the implications are of such technology successfully diffusing within our society.

The reality argument

Another interesting argument that Sample makes is that the coming of visualization is affecting younger people not only in how they engage the world but also "the ways in which they make judgments about what is convincing and true and how reality is perceived."[253] I must agree with this statement. However, based largely upon my own experience as an individual within the electronic culture generation, it seems that while I often prefer images, I apply a "literate" level of criticism before I accept it. As a society, we are forced to be shrewd when it comes to the media because, with each passing moment, the technologies of image manipulation and special effects become more convincing.

The information overload

While I cannot necessarily speak for others, it is certainly evident that for many individuals in American society, each day is confronted with a barrage of advertisements: billboards, commercials, flyers, posters, web ads, etc. This constant overload of information seems to force many (certainly myself) to make split-second,

---

[252] "What is Haptics (or Touch Feedback)?" *immersion.com.* Immersion Corporation, n.d. Web. 6 Apr 2011.
[253] Sample 48.

surface-level decisions to separate the "wheat from the chaff" and to select what is worth our attention while simply dismissing everything else. The post-1982 generation has been exposed to this inundation of media from birth and the more experienced individuals become in selecting media to satisfy their needs, the more media-savvy they become. Arguably, the more media-savvy one becomes, the higher the standards of evaluation.

As for the continual decline of mainline Protestant denominations, the implication here is that, as Leonard Sweet says, "The church has only half a brain right now, and it's the wrong half. We really need a whole-brain faith."[254] *What we've got here is a failure to communicate.* So now the only real question left is... what will the church do about it?

[254] Leonard Sweet. Interview by Mallory McCall. "Q&A: Restoring the supremacy of Jesus." *The United Methodist Reporter* 09 Jul. 2010: B1-2.

REFERENCES

Austin, Bruce A. *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences*. Belmont, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989. 59-62. Print.

Beadle, Richard. "The York Cycle," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre,* ed. Richard Beadle. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 90-103.

Beadle, Richard and King, Pamela M., eds., *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. ix-xvi, 211-215. Print.

---. "The Pinners – *The Crucifixion," York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 215-216. Print.

Beckwith, Sarah. *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings.* London and New York: Routledge, 1993. 3-35. Print.

Beckwith, Sarah. *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001. 3-59. Print.

Berardinelli, James. "Cool Hand Luke: A Film Review." *Reelviews.* James Berardinelli, 2004. 6 April 2011.

Bounds, Laura, Kirsten Brekken-Shea, Dottiedee Agnor, and Gayden Darnell, *Health & Fitness: A Guide to a Healthy Lifestyle,* Fourth Edition. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2009. 6, 8. Print.

"Cool Hand Luke." *The Internet Movie Database (IMDB).* Amazon.com, n.d. Web. 6 April 2011.

Cool Hand Luke. Dir. Stuart Rosenberg. Warner Brothers/Seven Arts: 1967, Film.

Cruea, Susan M. "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement," *ATQ**ns19.***3 (2005): 187. *WilsonWeb Humanities Full Text,* Texas A&M U, Evans Lib., Web. 3 Apr 2010.

"Evangelical United Brethren." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005. Web. 6 Apr 2011. <http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1340.asp>.

Exodus 20: 2-5a (New International Version)

"Film/Recording Boards and Registries." *Audio-Visual Conservation*. Library of Congress, 3 Aug 2007. Web. 6 April 2011. <http://www.loc.gov/avconservation/boards/>.

Flexner, Eleanor. *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1959. 77. Qtd. in Cruea 198. Print.

"Generation Gap." *wikipedia.org.* Wikipedia, 21 Feb 2011. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Green, Linda. "United Methodist death rates higher than U.S. average." *umc.org*. United Methodist Church, 2009. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Greenwald, Michael L., Roger Schultz, and Roberto D. Pomo. *The Longman Anthology of Drama and Theater: A Global Perspective*. Revised 1st ed. New York: Longman, 2001. Print.

Harris, Max. *The Dialogical Theatre: Dramatizations of the Conquest of Mexico and the Question of the Other.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. 146. Print.

Head, Sydney W. and Christopher H. Sterling, *Broadcasting in America: A Survey of Electronic Media,* Fifth Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. 53, 102. Print.

Hill-Vasquez, Heather. *Sacred Players: The Politics of Response in the Middle English Religious Drama*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007. 7. Print.

"History of Photography." *Pbs.org*. PBS Online, 1999. Web. 07 Apr 2011. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eastman/timeline/index_2.html>.

Jacobs, Christopher. "The Production Code of 1930." *und.edu*. University of North Dakota, n.d. Web. 7 Apr 2011. <http://www.und.edu/instruct/cjacobs/ProductionCode.htm>.

Jefferson, Joseph. *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson*. New York: New Century Co., 1889. 252, 253. Qtd. in, Johnson 167. Print.

Jenks, Philip. "Catholics, Mormons, Assemblies of God growing; Mainline churches report a continuing decline." *News from the National Council of Churches*. National Council of Churches USA, 2 Feb 2010. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Johnson, Claudia Durst. *Church and Stage: The Theatre as Target of Religious*

Condemnation in Nineteenth Century America. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008. Print.

Keene, Jennifer D., Saul Cornell, Edward T. O'Donnell, *Visions of America to 1877: A History of the United States*, vol. 1. n.p.: Prentice Hall, 2009. 252-268. Print.

Kennedy, Dennis. *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 3. Print.

Kochan, Lionel. *Beyond the Graven Image: A Jewish View*. New York: New York University Press, 1997. 7. Print.

Liebenson, Donald. "Famous Quotes: They put the words in the actors' mouths." *Article Collections*. Los Angeles Times, 2 Jan 2010. Web. 6 April 2011.

Lindvall, Terry. *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry.* New York and London: New York University Press, 2007. 96. Print.

---. "Silent cinema and religion: an overview (1895-1930)." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 13-31. Print.

Lyden, John. "Introduction." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 2. Print.

Lynch, Gordon. "Cultural theory and cultural studies." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 278-282. Print.

Mather, Increase. "An Arrow against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing, Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures. By the Ministers of Christ at Boston in New-England." Boston: S. Green, 1684. N. pag. Microform. *Texas A&M University Libraries* American Culture Series (n.d.): film b 1512 reel 50.6.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media*. New York: The New American Library, 1964. 35-45. Print.

"Methodist Church." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005. Web. 6 Apr 2011. <http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1432.asp>.

"Number of TV Households in America." *TVHistory.tv*. TVHistory.tv, n.d. Web. 07 Apr 2011. <http://www.tvhistory.tv/Annual_TV_Households_50-78.JPG>.

O'Neill, William L. *Feminism in America: A History.* 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989. 7-8. Qtd. in Cruea 190. Print.

Phillips, John. "Familiar Dialogues on Dancing, Between a Minister and a Dancer, Taken From Matter of Fact with an Appendix Containing Some Extracts from the Writings of Pious and Eminent Men Against the Entertainment of the Stage, and Other Vain Amusements Recommended to the Perusal of Christians of Every Denomination." New York: T. Kirk, 1798. N. pag. Microform. *Texas A&M University Libraries* American Culture Series (n.d.): film b 1512 reel 50.10.

"Population: Religion." *2011 Statistical Abstract*. U.S. Census Bureau, 20 Jan 2011. Web. 6 Apr 2011. <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/population/religion.html>.

"Products and Services Overview." *Sensable.com*. Sensable Technologies, 2011. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Quicke, Andrew. "The era of censorship (1930-1967)." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 32-51. Print.

Rushmore, Howard. "Motion Picture Commentator," *Christian Herald*, September 1940, 44. Print.

Sample, Tex. *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God.* Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1998. Print.

Scientific American, *Inventions and Discoveries: All the Milestones in Ingenuity – from the Discovery of Fire to the Invention of the Microwave Oven*. Rodney Carlisle. John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2004.

Shlain, Leonard. *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1998. vii-24, 323-326. Print.

Stone, Bryan. "Modern Protestant Approaches to Film (1960 to the Present)." *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 72-88. Print.

Sweet, Leonard. Interview by Mallory McCall. "Q&A: Restoring the supremacy of Jesus." *The United Methodist Reporter* 09 Jul 2010: B1-2. Print.

"Ten Nights in a Bar Room." *The Lost Museum*. American Social History

Productions, Inc., n.d. Web. 07 Apr 2011. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/53/>.

Twycross, Meg. "The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre,* ed. Richard Beadle. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 39-55. Print.

Tydeman, William. "An introduction to medieval English theatre," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, Ed. Richard Beadle. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 18-26. Print.

"United Methodist Church." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005. Web. 6 Apr 2011. <http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1469.asp>.

"U.S. Membership Report." *The Association of Religion Data Archives.* Association of Religion Data Archives, 2005. Web. 6 Apr 2011. <http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/US_compare80.asp>.

Wentz, Richard E. *Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. 64-65. Print.

"What is Haptics (or Touch Feedback)?" *immersion.com.* Immersion Corporation, n.d. Web. 6 Apr 2011.

Wickham, Glynne. *Early English Stages: 1300 to 1660.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 169. Print.

Zarrilli, Phillip B., Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. 258-392. Print.

APPENDIX A

A LIST OF GUILDS AND THEIR PAGEANTS

1. Barkers (Tanners) – *The Creation, and the Fall of Lucifer*
2. Plasterers – *The Creation myth – up to the Fifth Day*
3. Cardmakers – *Creation of Adam and Eve*
4. Fullers (Preparers of woolen cloth) – *Adam and Eve in Eden*
5. Coopers (Maker of wooden casks) – *The Fall of Man*
6. Armourers – *Expulsion from Eden*
7. Glovers – *Sacrifice of Cain and Abel*
8. Shipwrights – *Building of the Ark*
9. Fishers and Mariners – *Noah and his Wife*
10. Parchmenters and Bookbinders – *Abraham and Isaac*
11. Hosiers – *Departure of the Israelites from Egypt; Ten Plagues; Crossing of the Red Sea*
12. Spicers – *Annunciation and Visitation*
13. Pewterers and Founders – *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*
14. Tile-thatchers – *Journey to Bethlehem*
15. Chandlers (Candlemakers) – *Shepherds*
16. Masons – *Coming of the Three Kings to Herod*
17. Goldsmiths – *Coming of the Kings: Adoration*
18. Marshals (Grooms) – *Flight into Egypt*
19. Girdlers and Nailers – *Slaughter of the Innocents*
20. Spurriers and Lorimers (Spurmakers, makers of bits, etc.) – *Christ with the Doctors*
21. Barbers – *Baptism of Jesus*
22. Smiths – *Temptation*
23. Curriers (Men who dress leather) – *Transfiguration*
24. Capmakers – *Woman Taken in Adultery; Lazarus*
25. Skinners – *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*
26. Cutlers – *Conspiracy*
27. Bakers – *Last Supper*
28. Cordwainers (Shoemakers) – *Agony and Betrayal*
29. Bowyers and Fletchers – *Peter's Denial; Jesus before Caiphas*
30. Tapiters (Makers of tapestry and carpets) and Couchers – *Dream of Pilate's Wife*
31. Listers (Dyers) – *Trial before Herod*
32. Cooks and Water-leaders – *Second Accusation before Pilot; Remorse of Judas; Purchase of the Field of Blood*
33. Tilemakers – *Second Trial before Pilate*
34. Shearmen – *Christ Led to Calvary*
35. Pinners and Painters – *Crucifixion*
36. Butchers – *Mortification of Christ; Burial*
37. Saddlers – *Harrowing of Hell*

38. Carpenters – *Resurrection*
39. Winedrawers – *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene*
40. Sledmen – *Travellers to Emmaus*
41. Hatmakers, Masons, Labourers – *Purification of Mary; Simeon and Anna*
42. Scriveners – *Incredulity of Thomas*
43. Tailors – *Ascension*
44. Potters – *Descent of the Holy Spirit*
45. Drapers (Dealers in cloth and dry goods) – *The Death of Mary*
46. Weavers – *The Appearance of Mary to Thomas*
47. Ostlers (Stablemen) – *Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin*
48. Mercers (Dealers in textiles) – *Judgment Day*

APPENDIX B

THE CRUCIFIXION EXCERPT, LINES 97-144 WITH INTEGRATED NOTES

1 SOLDIER: Sir knights, say, how work we now?
2 SOLDIER: Yes, indeed, I think I hold this hand,
And to the hole I have it brought
Full obediently without using a rope.
1 SOLDIER: Strike on then hard, for he who redeemed you [Christ].
2 SOLDIER: Yes, here is a short thick nail [that] will stoutly stand,
Through bones and sinews it shall be applied—
This work is well, I will guarantee.
1 SOLDIER: Say sir, how do we there?
This business is not at an end.
3 SOLDIER: The hole is more than a foot out,
The sinews are so shrunken.

4 SOLDIER: I believe the spot which was marked
has been bored in the wrong place
[i.e. and not where it was marked].
2 SOLDIER: Then must he endure in bitter pain.
3 SOLDIER: In faith, it was inaccurately drilled,
That is why it is such a bad piece of work.
1 SOLDIER: Why speak ye so? Fasted on a rope
And pull him [to the bores], by his head and feet.
3 SOLDIER: Yah, thou commands effortlessly as a lord;
Come help to haul, curse you.
1 SOLDIER: Now indeed that shall I do—
Full swiftly (an aside) as a snail.
3 SOLDIER: And I shall fasten him to the cross,
Full nimbly with a nail.

This work will hold, that dare I promise,
For now are fest fast both his hands.
4 SOLDIER: Go we all four then to his feet,
So we shall usefully pass our time.
2 SOLDIER: Let see what jest his pain might lighten,
Thereto my back now would I bend.
4 SOLDIER: Oh, this work is all out of place—
This boring must all be altered.
1 SOLDIER: Ah, peace man, for Mahound,

Let no man know that strange thing [magic],
A rope shall tug him down
Even if all his sinews go asunder.

2 SOLDIER: That cord full fittingly can I fasten,
The comfort of this wretch to cool.
1 SOLDIER: Bind on then bind, that all be ready,
It is no matter how terrible he feels.
2 SOLDIER: Lug on ye both a little yet.
3 SOLDIER: I shall not cease, as I have joy.
4 SOLDIER: And I shall attempt him for to hit.
2 SOLDIER: Oh, haul!
4 SOLDIER: Whoa, now, I hold it well.
1 SOLDIER: Stop, drive in that nail,
So that no fault be found.
4 SOLDIER: This working would not fail
If four bulls here were bound.

APPENDIX C

COMPILED FILMOGRAPHY

Title	Year	Director	From:
The Avenging Conscience	1914	D. Griffith	Lindvall
Ben Hur	1907	S. Olcott	Lindvall
Ben Hur	1925	F. Niblo	Lindvall
The Bicycle Thief	1948	V. De Sica	Quicke
The Birth of a Nation	1915	D. Griffith	Lindvall
The Blot	1921	L. Weber	Lindvall
The Circus	1928	C. Chaplin	Lindvall
A Corner in Wheat	1909	D. Griffith	Lindvall
A Distant Thunder	1978	D. Thompson	Stone
Dogma	1999	K. Smith	Stone
Don't Change Your Husband	1919	C. DeMille	Lindvall
Down to Earth	1917	J. Emerson	Lindvall
A Drunkard's Reformation	1909	D. Griffith	Lindvall
Easy Street	1917	C. Chaplin	Lindvall
The Faith Healer	1922	W. Moody	Lindvall
Flirting with Fate	1916	C. Cabanne	Lindvall
For Pete's Sake	1968	J. Collier	Stone
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse	1921	R. Ingram	Lindvall
From the Manger to the Cross	1912	S. Olcott	Lindvall
The Gaucho	1928	F. Jones	Lindvall
God of Creation	1946	I. Moon	Quicke
Going My Way	1949	L. McCary	Quicke
The Great Commandment	1939	I. Pichel	Quicke
The Habit of Happiness	1916	A. Dwan	Lindvall
Hallelujah	1929	K. Vidor	Lindvall
He Comes Up Smiling	1918	A. Dwan	Lindvall
The Hiding Place	1975	J. Collier	Stone, Quicke
His Land	1970	J. Collier	Stone
The Hoodlum Saint	1946	N. Taurog	Quicke
The Hoodlum	1919	S. Franklin	Lindvall
Hop, the Devil's Brew	1916	L. Weber	Lindvall
How Green Was My Valley	1941	J. Ford	Quicke
I'd Climb the Highest Mountain	1951	H. King	Quicke
Image of the Beast	1980	D. Thompson	Stone
Intolerance	1916	D. Griffith	Lindvall
The Jazz Singer	1927	A. Crosland	Lindvall
Jesus	1979	P. Sykes and J. Kirsch	Stone

The Keys of the Kingdom	1944	J. Stahl	Quicke
The Kid	1921	C. Chaplin	Lindvall
The King of Kings	1927	C. DeMille	Lindvall
The Last Temptation of Christ	1988	M. Scorsese	Stone
Left Behind II: Tribulation Force	2002	B. Corcoran	Stone
Left Behind: The Movie	2000	V. Sarin	Stone
Left Behind: World at War	2005	C. Baxley	Stone
The Life of Paul series	1948-51	J. Coyle	Quicke
Little Annie Rooney	1925	W. Beaudine	Lindvall
The Living Christ series	1951-7	J. Coyle	Quicke
Manslaughter	1922	C. DeMille	Lindvall
Martin Luther	1953	I. Pichel	Stone, Quicke
Meet John Doe	1941	F. Capra	Quicke
The Miracle (Il miraculo)	1948, US 1950	R. Rossellini	Quicke
The Miracle Man	1919	G. Tucker	Lindvall
Mr. Fix-It	1918	A. Dwan	Lindvall
The New York Hat	1912	D. Griffith	Lindvall
Noah's Ark	1928	M. Curtiz	Lindvall
The Nut	1921	T. Reed	Lindvall
Oberammergau Passion Play	1898	H. Vincent	Lindvall
One Foot in Heaven	1941	R. Lord and I. Rapper	Quicke
Open City	1945	R. Rossellini	Quicke
Our Hospitality	1923	J. Blystone	Lindvall
The Passion of the Christ	2004	M. Gibson	Stone
Pastor Hall	1940	R. Boulting	Quicke
The Pawnbroker	1965	S. Lumet	Stone, Quicke
The People vs. John Doe	1916	L. Weber	Lindvall
The Pilgrim	1923	C. Chaplin	Lindvall
The Pilgrim's Progress	1946	C. Baptista	Quicke
The Prodigal Planet	1983	D. Thompson	Stone
Quo Vadis	1951	M. LeRoy	Quicke
Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm	1917	M. Neilan	Lindvall
The Reformers	1913	D. Griffith	Lindvall
The Restless Ones	1965	D. Ross	Stone
The Road to Yesterday	1925	C. DeMille	Lindvall
Sergeant York	1941	H. Hawks	Quicke
Shadows	1922	T. Forman	Lindvall
Shoes	1916	L. Weber	Lindvall

The Sky Pilot	1921	K. Vidor	Lindvall
Sparrows	1926	W. Beaudine	Lindvall
Stars in My Crown	1950	J. Tourneur	Quicke
The Story of a Fountain Pen	1939, 1941	C. Baptista	Quicke
A Streetcar Named Desire	1950	E. Kazan	Quicke
The Ten Commandments	1923	C. DeMille	Lindvall
Tess of the Storm Country	1922	J. Robertson	Lindvall
The Song of Bernadette	1943	H. King	Quicke
A Thief in the Night	1972	D. Thompson	Stone
Till We Meet Again	1944	E. Borzage	Quicke
Time to Run	1972	J. Collier	Stone
Two a Penny	1967	J. Collier	Stone
Way Down East	1920	D. Griffith	Lindvall
When the Clouds Roll By	1919	V. Fleming	Lindvall
Where Are My Children?	1916	L. Weber	Lindvall
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?	1966	M. Nichols	Quicke

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name:	Jennifer Grace Purdy
Address:	First United Methodist Church 710 N. Austin St., Seguin, TX 78155
Email Address:	purdyjen@me.com
Education:	B.A., English & Theatre Arts, Texas A&M University, 2010.